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FIRST THINGS

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NUMBER 107

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THE HUMAN GENOME IN HUMAN CONTEXT *Stephen M. Barr*

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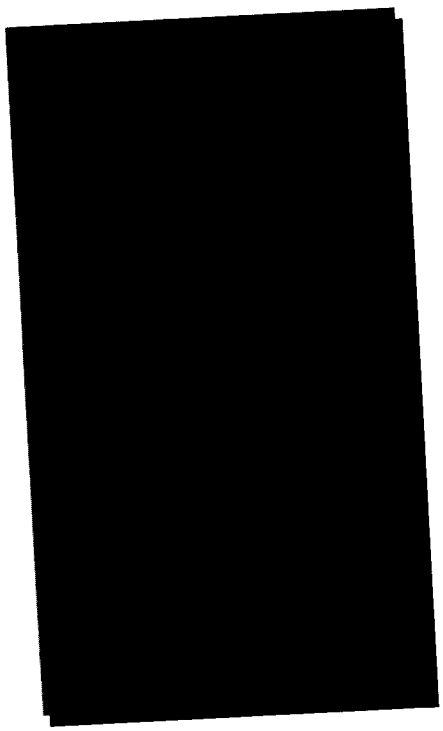

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The Pope in Israel

It wasn't the fact that a pope visited Israel that made John Paul II's visit to Israel so awe-inspiring—but that *this* Pope visited (George Weigel, "Holy Land Pilgrimage: A Diary," June/July). Every comment made by Pope John Paul II was followed by a political interpretation on the level of his support for this or that Israeli or Palestinian political position. The Israeli press can't seem to take religion of any sort as anything other than "politics by other means," and as the meeting of the three religious leaders showed, Islam is not yet ready to admit even the slightest religious seriousness of anything other than Islam.

As an Orthodox Jew, I was a little worried about the Pope's potential influence on the mass of Israeli secular youth. John Paul II's legendary youth masses, his intellectual honesty and frail dignity, are things that the mass of our youth do not witness. These are children to whom religion is represented by the government-run Chief Rabbinate—a sort of Department of Motor Vehicles with rabbinic ordination. Although there are many good people working in the Chief Rabbinate (including the present two Chief Rabbis), essentially their job is to administer religious services such as marriage ceremonies in much the same way that the DMV gives driving tests. We have to do it, it's annoying but not really painful, and once it's done (assuming we drive well) we don't have to see them again. And of course the fanatically secular press distorts any good that does come out of this government agency.

Needless to say, Israel's secular youth are so far from any religious thoughts or desires that only year-long trips to Tibet or India bring even the slightest spiritual longings. My fears of mass conversions of Jewish children to Catholicism were unfounded. I am certainly happy that these teenagers are still somewhat in the Jewish fold of course, but am just a bit disappointed that no religious feelings came to the surface.

The Pope's influence in this country, though, was great. The Israeli press and the Israeli people didn't quite know what to make of this man. Here was a seventy-nine-year-old world leader who quite clearly was giddy with excitement over his presence at the holy places. Here was a public figure who you saw and felt was here not only as the leader of the world's billion or so Catholics, but as a private man deeply moved and thankful to commune with God on holy ground. Here was a religious man with the dignity and intellectual seriousness of that legendary group of Eastern-European born Orthodox rabbis (born of the same generation and geography as the Pope) who with their mere presence rejuvenated Judaism in America.

Certainly, the Pope's unscheduled return trip to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher for private prayer was as moving to me as it was confusing to the government ministers responsible for his trip. That a man should return to pray when he clearly didn't "need" to ("need" having only a political meaning) was startling to these wholly political people.

The most fascinating part of the trip to me was the silence that has reigned in the Israeli press and political world since he left. No comments on whether his Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial speech was good enough or not; no mention at all of his symbolic recognition/nonrecognition of Israeli/Palestinian sovereignty over Jerusalem.

I take this uncharacteristic Israeli silence as an embarrassed silence.

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Maybe in the end they did get it—maybe after witnessing the politicized religious leadership and amoral political leadership in this country; after following the immoral leadership of the current American President—the dignity of *this* Pope showed that bastion of Israeli atheism that God can be served with seriousness of purpose and humbleness of person.

In the ultimate irony, Pope John Paul II's visit to Israel may be the signal event that ultimately rejuvenates Judaism and Jewish practice in this Jewish country.

Ira Slomowitz
Kfar Saba
Israel

George Weigel's "Holy Land Pilgrimage: A Diary" is a moving account of what is undoubtedly one of the most significant papal events of this Jubilee year. Not only did the author faithfully reflect the intentions and impetus behind this historic papal visit in the midst of the incessant media chatter, but he seized the many opportunities provided by that very chatter to transform them into teaching moments. Very much in imitation of the humble pilgrim he set out to chronicle.

That John Paul II is a communicator par excellence is confirmed by Weigel's description of that "week of icons"—those unforgettable images of the Pope in Bethlehem, at the Dehaishe refugee camp, at Yad Vashem, and at the Western Wall now indelibly etched in our collective psyches. In an age when public figures relentlessly exploit photo opportunities, that "week of icons" presented the world with a different "iconographic atlas" of a land that is at once scarred and holy.

Jem Sullivan
Washington, D.C.

Reason and Revelation

The strange argument of Professor Robert P. George ("A Clash of Orthodoxies: An Exchange," June/July) that secularism "possesses no resources for answering the question 'Why should I respect the rights of others?'" requires an answer, because it contradicts thousands of years of worldwide history.

It cannot be denied that from the dawn of history, before the existence of any of the world's religions, humanity discovered and applied the moral principle, "Do not to others what you would not have others do to you and your loved ones," which is the basis of all civilization.

It is called enlightened self-interest, based on human reason and experience.

John Tomasin
West New York, New Jersey

Thanks for Robert P. George and the second wave of his assault on secular orthodoxy. Far from being fallacious, his arguments are cogent, concise, and directed at the most dangerous ideas of our time. However, he does make a historical mistake that may be nothing more than that; then again, it may also expose the danger of privileging natural reason over revelation.

Near the beginning of the article he alludes to the existence of something he calls "traditional morality" and its "condemnation of abortion, suicide, infanticide of so-called defective children, and certain other life-taking acts." Towards the end, he names a few exponents of this tradition: "The philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, as well as the thought of the greatest Roman jurists." These thinkers, he says, "clearly (though not unmixed with error) affirm the nature and value of the human person."

Let us focus first on Plato and his most important text, the *Republic*. In it he has Socrates endorse both infanticide and abortion. Of infanticide, and the eugenic program it is meant to promote, he says: "The children of inferior parents, or any child of the others that is born defective, they'll hide in a secret and unknown place, as is appropriate." Exposure as the common method of infanticide in antiquity will be familiar to readers of *Oedipus Rex*.

Plato's meaning becomes clearer when he recommends the following course of action for leaders who have conceived unplanned children: "They should be careful not to let a single fetus see the light of day, but if one is conceived and forces its way to the light, they must deal with it in the knowledge that no nurture is available for it." When we consider these passages alongside others just as chilling, and when we remember Plato's antipathy to the family—something he hopes to undermine with his program of sexual lotteries—it is difficult to see what his morality, "traditional" or otherwise, has to do with the noble arguments of Professor George.

What about Aristotle? He recommends infanticide for the deformed, as well as abortion for population control. Neither should we forget his infamous theory of natural slavery: "Any human being that by nature belongs not to himself but to another is by nature a slave; and a human being belongs to another whenever, in spite of being a man, he is a piece of property, i.e., a tool." No one who considers some humans tools can claim to recognize the nature and value of the human person.

As for the Roman jurists, their attitude toward slavery was contradictory. Although they sometimes considered slaves humans, more often they treated them like any other piece of property. When someone killed a slave, for example, the problem in their eyes was rarely how to react to a moral transgression; rather, they debated how the slave's owner should be compensated—in money, just as if any other piece of his property had been destroyed.

This same attitude toward the human person is also evident in the power of life and death that they granted the paterfamilias. Most scholars agree that until the Chris-

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tianization of the Empire this power permitted fathers to expose unwanted children. Like Plato and Aristotle before them, therefore, the greatest Roman jurists seem to have measured the value of dependent persons according to the value they had *for others*, rather than the value they had *in themselves*.

Has Prof. George made a merely historical mistake? Before adducing these exponents of "traditional morality," he suggests that "Jewish and Christian thinkers find in revelation the confirmation, but not the root, of their philosophical affirmation of the nature and value of the human person." The root of this affirmation, we are to infer, is the natural reason available to all. Without revelation, it seems, committed thinkers could affirm the nature and value of the human person on their own. But if that were true, why didn't thinkers as committed as Plato, Aristotle, and the greatest Roman jurists do just that? Why, on the contrary, do they never mention a right to life—a right possessed by all human persons, no matter how weak, infirm, or dependent they may be?

Prof. George himself provides the answer. "I'm worried," he writes, "about our natural human desire to be free of the moral duties we owe to others—particularly the weak, the infirm, and the dependent." This desire tempts us to credit "a distinction between 'persons' and human nonpersons"; but the same desire tempted Plato to credit his utopian dream, Aristotle the notion of a natural slave, and the Roman jurists a mercantile understanding of human beings.

Ironically, some of their thoughts, taken to logical extremes, could have produced a respect for all persons. Aristotle's natural teleology, for instance, can be used to accord potentially rational animals the same moral status as actually rational animals, just as more rigorous thought about the peculiar status of freedmen in Roman society might have provoked a juridical recognition of the inconsistency, not to mention injustice, of slavery. We must recognize, however, that the ancients, for all their wisdom, never took their thoughts to these extremes; instead they chose other thoughts taken to other extremes—too often to the degradation of the weak, infirm, and dependent.

Revelation must therefore be more than a "confirmation" of natural reason. Among other things, it is a remedy against the regrettable temptations of natural reason and those who exercise it (more often than not the strong, healthy, and independent). As often as revelation confirms natural reason, then, it must also guide it. As a result, Jewish and Christian philosophers should consult reason and revelation together, not as one discovering and the other confirming, but as both informing one another.

Patrick Lee Miller
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Robert P. George replies:

Mr. Tomasin asserts—indeed, he says it "cannot be denied"—that "from the dawn of history, before the existence of any of the world's religions, humanity discovered and applied the moral principle, 'Do not to others what you would not have others do to you and your loved ones,' which is the basis of all civilization."

This is ludicrous. True, prophets and holy men in many of the world's great civilizations have proposed something like the Golden Rule. Still, "from the dawn of history" that great and true principle has more often than not been ignored, disregarded, and even mocked.

More to the point, however, is the fact that from ancient times down to the present, shrewd calculators have had no difficulty identifying occasions on which it is plainly in their short- and even long-term self-interest to do things that violate the rights of others. So the question arises: What, on secularism's premises, is the *moral reason* for people to respect others' rights when they could get away with doing otherwise—perhaps even going undetected? Self-interest, however "enlightened," is not an answer.

I am grateful to Mr. Miller for his generous praise of my argument. He is concerned, however, that I make a "historical mistake," and perhaps something worse, in giving too much credit to ancient thinkers for important insights into the nature and value of the human person.

When I said that Jewish and Christian thinkers find the philosophical affirmation of the nature and value of the human person (though not unmixed with error) in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, as well as in the thought of the greatest Roman jurists, I was not trying to hide or excuse Plato's apparent teaching in the *Republic* about abortion and infanticide or Aristotle's erroneous (though also much misunderstood) teaching about "natural slaves." Particularly with regard to Plato, however, we should bear in mind John Finnis' warning against "reading dramatic explorations of the foundations of ethics as if they were political manifestos or treatises."

At the same time, we should recognize, as does Finnis, the "incompleteness of Plato's appropriation of the implications of his own radical grasp of human equality in substance and in right." The same can be said for Aristotle, Musonius Rufus, and others. Mr. Miller is entirely right to remind us of this incompleteness.

Let us not forget, however, that the ancient thinkers, like all thinkers, were working in a cultural context. While they were able to overcome some of the prejudices and moral misunderstandings prevalent in Greek and Roman culture—hence their greatness—it is hardly surprising that they did not manage to overcome them all. The point I wish to make is that, where they failed, the injustices and other evils that they accepted and sometimes even endorsed were inconsistent with fundamental premises of ethical understanding that they themselves had identified and brilliantly articulated.

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It is in these fundamental premises that contemporary Jewish and Christian teachers find common ground with Plato, Aristotle, and the Roman jurists—ground they most decidedly do not share with orthodox secularists, whose thought is rooted in the teachings of Hume, Nietzsche, Bentham, Marx, etc.

It is worth bearing in mind that Jews and Christians themselves, even with the profound benefit of biblical revelation, have struggled to overcome misunderstandings and prejudices that led, for example, even the greatest medieval theologians to support the death penalty for heresy. And, of course, even as late as the nineteenth century many orthodox Christians were blinded by prejudice and misunderstanding from seeing that the Golden Rule pronounced by Jesus himself is simply incompatible with the practice of slavery. The struggle goes on today with other issues.

Although I did not make the historical mistake Mr. Miller thought he found in my comment, I must say that I am impressed by his suggestion for conceiving the proper relation between reason and revelation. Reason and revelation should, he says, "inform" one another. I think that's right. Pope John Paul II, in the opening sentence of his encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio* ("Faith and Reason"), captures the thought quite beautifully: "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth." God has given us both "wings." Let's use them.

Capitalism and Efficiency

Michael Novak's description of capitalism in his article "The Godlessness that Failed" (June/July) is, in my opinion, superficial at best.

Mr. Novak asks: When did capitalism, the kind that provoked the anticapitalism of Marx and others, arise? Mr. Novak suggests that this capitalism was a *new system*, involving invention and enterprise, and it "applied imagination and practical intelligence to creating new goods and services not provided by earlier systems, agrarian, feudal, and mercantile."

I would like to suggest that the capitalism that began the process of dehumanization of economics and society, and led inevitably to anticapitalism, was permitted and promoted by the imaginative development of a *new economic person*, i.e., *a fictitious, artificial economic person created by government*, namely, the limited liability corporation.

The modern form of the corporation, according to *Britannica Micropaedia*, took form "gradually over the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century in Great Britain, the United States, France, and Germany with the passage of general incorporation laws." This timing coincides with the early stages of the industrial revolution whose humanitarian abuses inspired the various forms of socialism.

The *Britannica* continues: "By the final third of the nineteenth century the last legal obstacles to the corporate form were removed and the ensuing period (approximately 1870-1910) saw an unprecedented expansion of industrial production and the concomitant predominance of the corporate form."

Although governments have intervened from time to time to check their grossest conduct, these government-created artificial "persons" increasingly dominate national and international economies.

For the supporters of globalization by multinational corporations, the cry is for ever-increasing efficiency, as if ultimate efficiency in the production of information, goods, and services, organized on a worldwide scale, were the final goal of humanity.

But efficiency is the enemy and exterminator of human values. Even a small corporation that tries to operate with compassion and responsibility to its employees and community is seen to be weak and "inefficient" and is an easy victim for any shark corporation.

Family farms are inefficient; wipe them out! Mom and Pop stores are inefficient; wipe them out! Japanese rice farmers are inefficient; wipe them out! French farmers are inefficient; wipe them out! When and if (God forbid!) the multinationals and globalizers finally achieve their worldwide ultimate efficiency, there won't be a human value left.

Yes, Mr. Novak, the Godlessness of communism failed; but Godlessness lives on in the phenomenal power and success of government-created artificial modern corporate inhuman "persons."

I am not anticapitalist. Indeed, the limited liability corporation is useful and even necessary for the accumulation of capital for large projects. Leaving aside the consequences of the overwhelming raw impersonal power of multi-multibillion-dollar enterprises, I suggest you examine the proposition that efficiency is usually achieved by the sacrifice of human values.

Robert C. McCarthy
Buchanan Dam, Texas

Michael Novak replies:
Efficiency is, to be sure, no alpha or omega. And inefficiency has its charms. (I recall complaints at Vatican II about how slow and inefficient the Curia was; when someone asked John XXIII how many people work at the Vatican, he replied, "About half.")

But in addition to Mr. McCarthy's own argument in favor of the limited liability corporation, it is worth some attention that the same laws (or analogous laws) protect churches, universities, libraries, museums, and many other limited liability corporations.

And I can't think of any virtue, even love, that is not subject to abuse, and each needs to be practiced in due measure and in the right way, at the right time. Without efficiency, I don't see how worker productivity—

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RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS
Editor-in-Chief

and hence workers' recompense, and hence universal affluence—would rise and spread its benefits; or how prices would come down, making higher quality more widely available to all.

Socialism was not a reaction solely to the alleged abuses of capitalism (these are usually measured without comparison to those of feudalism or socialism), but also to liberty, personal responsibility, and modernity. Socialism was an atavism, a longing to be ruled by authority.

Politics in the Streets

I share James Nuechterlein's instinctive reaction to mass protests, both past and present ("The Politics of the Id," June/July). But his dismissal of their positions as mere "hate" is not simply too facile, it is disturbing and ultimately dangerous. While "mass protest politics" is indeed dangerous, the evolution of protests into mass protest politics is not the fault of the protesters. Rather, the fault lies with our elites, and in particular with our intellectuals, who allow themselves to become too closely linked with the vested interests of the times.

The emotional commitment that drives protesters is the necessary fuel that powers the periodic changes that are required to renew free societies. When events clearly demonstrate that moral wrongs and ethical lapses are on the increase, and huge numbers of people fall deeper into poverty while a relative few reap huge benefits, the production of emotional fuel is guaranteed. Where and how it will burn is another issue altogether.

Our elites, and conservative intellectuals in particular, have utterly failed to recognize, much less address, the daunting problems posed by the massive supranational corporations, foundations, and nongovernmental organizations now emerging on the world stage. Such entities are of a form and scale never seen before, and most of the concepts necessary to deal with them will probably take on a new form, but that is no excuse for hiding behind the status quo.

Do not expect the sources of the requisite emotional fuel behind the protests to also provide the engine, controls, and mission definition. That is someone else's job. And don't expect it to be easy or safe.

Thomas J. Rath
Pasadena, California

James Nuechterlein is highly critical of public demonstrations, mass protests, and "street politics," particularly as manifested recently in Seattle and Washington, D.C., where thousands assembled to express opposition to and anger about the practices of institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO). Such assemblies, Mr. Nuechterlein feels, are "a form of insanity," and are "the enemy of democratic persuasion." Strong, even fighting words. They certainly evince an aristocratic disdain for the common people (except, as he allows, when they focus their demonstrative will on issues such as—surprise!—abortion). But, more importantly, Mr. Nuechterlein makes claims about the proper modes and methods of democratic debate that deserve rebuttal.

In America, our political culture makes us largely spectators, bystanders, and television watchers. Even in presidential elections—presumably a supreme democratic moment—a mere 50 percent of "We the People" vote. How rare and unlikely it is for most people to come together in public forums to engage in political speech or action with flesh-and-blood friends, neighbors, and fellow citizens. Where do the "deliberative democratic politics" that Mr. Nuechterlein speaks of take place? (One hopes the answer is not television programs such as *Capital Gang* or *Meet the Press*.) Is that deliberation meant to include ordinary citizens?

Whatever the weaknesses of demonstrations like those highlighting the dangers posed by the WTO

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(and the weaknesses were certainly distorted by media coverage of the event), the protests represent an important, instructive departure from the typically passive relationship most of us have with government intended to be "by, for, and of" ourselves. Real-life, face-to-face involvement in issues affecting everyone has become so exceptional that we are not even aware of its absence. The WTO protesters opened a window onto a different sort of relationship toward what goes on in our world, a relationship where active, personal involvement and belief in the power to make a difference have not died. Mr. Nuechterlein tries to close that window, grumbling, "How noisy and uncouth!" What makes him so sure that "street politics" are inferior to "sitting in front of your TV" politics?

Invoking Al Capp's S.W.I.N.E. (Students Wildly Indignant about Nearly Everything), Mr. Nuechterlein takes a swipe at late '60's activists. Given the politics of passivity and our current sense of impotence over influencing events around us, perhaps it is better to be one of the pigs than one of the C.O.W.S.—Consumerist Onlookers Watching Silently.

Gary Shapiro
Minneapolis, Minnesota

James Nuechterlein replies:
Thomas J. Rath defends radical protests on the grounds that they are concerned with genuine issues that have not adequately been addressed by intellectuals and politicians, and that events like the recent riot politics of Seattle and Washington, D.C., reflect the "emotional commitment" necessary to fuel "the periodic changes that renew free societies." But radicals always believe that the system is inadequately responsive—that's what defines them as radicals—and so, by Mr. Rath's lights, we are (justifiably) doomed to a politics of perpetual radical protest. I, for one, am glad that's not the way our politics normally functions.

Gary Shapiro's bottom line—better S.W.I.N.E. than C.O.W.S.—strikes me as analogous to telling a teenager who has been spending too much time alone in his room that he would be better off joining a motorcycle gang. If the alternative to passivity is what went on in Seattle and Washington, give me passivity every time.

The Uses of Moderation

In "Conservative Confusions" (May), James Nuechterlein performs a great service by clarifying the deeper divisions within American conservatism exposed by John McCain's brief hour in the sun as a conservative reformer and viable presidential candidate. But when he tries to refute McCain's claim to the mantle of both Theodore Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan, Mr. Nuechterlein loses sight of the very idea that inspired his article: that conservatives are on the move—and they are headed toward the political center.

American political moderates—a category in which I would place Senator McCain—are made, not born. Moderation is seldom a lifelong calling. Instead it is a seizing of a moment—sometimes lasting for years and other times only the duration of a particular political battle—when partisan figures move to the center, either from the right or the left, in order to achieve a great end.

McCain should have earned a lot of credibility by declaring his admiration for Theodore Roosevelt. But few Republican voters today care enough about the history of the early twentieth century to notice the flaws in Mr. Nuechterlein's depiction of TR. The Bull Moose platform of 1912 may have been a "sweeping program of federal regulation and . . . social welfare." But had TR been elected on that platform, he would have paid no more attention to it than other Presidents have to promises made by the conventions that nominated them. The platform was the price TR paid to fuse together his own constituency of Republicans and urban reformers with the new intellectuals of the Progressive movement, like Herbert Croly, who preferred TR's proven record as a reformer to Woodrow Wilson's more idealistic promises.

TR saw in the passions of 1912 a historic opportunity to moderate Republican conservatism and progressive radicalism by incorporating both into a single third-party movement. Likewise, his earlier presidency was a textbook example of political moderation: defusing a dangerously polarized society by giving new professional, middle-class elites the chance to effect those specific reforms in conservation, food and health protection, and labor relations for which strong public support existed.

McCain's moderation balanced the same kind of activism on tobacco, campaign finance, and supply-side fiscal caution against his traditional Republican suspicion of centralization and economic intervention. The gloss that McCain added to that improvised, circumstantial, but nonetheless authentic moderation was to imitate Ronald Reagan's easy shuffling off of promises to religious conservatives, although McCain did so not with Reagan's bonhomie, but with a feistiness authentic to his own personality.

The McCain and Bill Bradley moderate candidacies of 1999-2000 may both be harbingers of the future.

Robert M. Calhoon
Professor of History
University of North Carolina,
Greensboro

James Nuechterlein replies:
First, about Theodore Roosevelt. Professor Calhoon says flatly that TR, had he been elected in 1912, would have ignored the left-wing platform on which he ran. But that platform was simply an extension of the programs Roosevelt had earlier proposed to Congress in 1907-08, the last two years of his presidency. The Bull Moose platform represented

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TR's own convictions, and was not simply "the price [he] paid" to cobble together the Progressive movement. The TR of 1912 was no "moderate"—he was, in any reasonable depiction of his political context, a persuaded man of the left. There is no reason not to suppose he would have tried to implement the Bull Moose platform.

This suggests the larger problem of Prof. Calhoon's position: his wonderfully vague use of "moderate." A moderate, in Prof. Calhoon's lexicon, is someone not too liberal, not too conservative—someone, that is, who does or proposes things Prof. Calhoon approves of. But a definition that can take in positions as disparate as those of Theodore Roosevelt, John McCain, and Bill Bradley (and maybe even Ronald Reagan) is no definition at all.

Abortion and Liberty

Charles Colson unfairly deprecates *Roe, Casey*, and other Supreme Court privacy rights rulings as taking "the rights of self-government away from the people" ("Modernist Impasse, Christian Opportunity," June/July). Rather, those rulings expanded liberty and extended protection from the tyranny of temporary or permanent majorities or pluralities.

Mr. Colson and Evangelicals and Catholics Together may approach social problems one way, but vast numbers of Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and naturalistic humanists seek alternatives that are ethical, responsible, value-affirming, and freedom-expanding.

Edd Doerr
Americans for Religious Liberty
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Southern Anti-Catholicism

After I read Richard John Neuhaus' "Blaming Bob Jones" (June/July), I thought a little clarification of the situation of us Catholics in the South might be in order.

I think George W. Bush's people played on the fears of many Baptist and other Protestant denominations to paint John McCain as a pro-abortion liberal. The idea that Bush's appearance at Bob Jones University did not reinforce anti-Catholic opinion in the South is, in my humble opinion and to use Father Neuhaus' own words, "bogus." While liberal elitism may be the enemy of both Catholics and evangelicals, I don't count on that to reinforce our bonds. I live with my family and practice medicine along the North Carolina-South Carolina border. There are a lot of good people here, but there is also a lot of anti-Catholicism. We are considered a cult by many and dubious Christians by a great many others.

This has nothing to do with the theology of justification versus good works. It stems from long-held prejudices that get reinforced and catered to by visits to places like Bob Jones University.

Stephen J. Candela, M.D.
Whiteville, North Carolina

Hoping Against Hell

I had the same reaction as your Richard John Neuhaus (While We're At It, June/July) to Father Regis Scanlon's attack in the *New Oxford Review* on Hans Urs von Balthasar. As Fr. Neuhaus rightly points out, Balthasar never claims that Hell is—as an ascertainable, assertible fact—empty (or for that matter occupied). His sole claim is that the Church's liturgy obligates all believers to *hope for* (which does not mean the same thing as "expect," still less "count on") universal redemption, a liturgical obligation grounded in 1 Timothy 2:1-4.

I would add only one point to Fr. Neuhaus' own nuanced reaction: without a life spent praying for the salvation of all persons in the *next* life, love of enemies is impossible in *this* life. Notice how St. Paul's exhortation to Christians that they love their enemies (Romans 12) comes immediately after his rapturous paean to God for His wondrous ways: "For God has consigned everyone over to disobedience that He might have mercy on all" (11:32).

Odd, too, how the advocates of a populated Hell never seem to put themselves there, as Balthasar occasionally points out (with perhaps a wry smile as he does so). St. Paul makes close to the same point when he says, again in Romans: "You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself" (2:1).

But the contemporary writer who has best explained this connection of love of enemies and the possibility (again, not likelihood) of universal redemption is, for me anyway, not Hans Urs von Balthasar but the French Jewish mystic Simone Weil, who says in *Gravity and Grace*: "If someone does me an injury I must insure this injury not degrade me; and I must do so out of love for him who inflicts it, so that he may not really have done evil."

It probably goes without saying that the promptings of our hearts go in just the opposite direction, as Weil would be the first to acknowledge: "When we hurt others we are transferring to them the degradation which we bear in ourselves. That is why we are inclined to hurt people—as a way of deliverance." This natural inclination to strike back sets up a conflict in the "foul rag-and-bone shop" of the heart, one that we all recognize: between what we ought to do (love our enemies) and what we feel like doing (take our hurts out on others). This conflict, Weil notes, can be resolved only in the Cross: "The false God changes suffering into violence. The true God changes violence into suffering." That lapidary formulation captures the essence both of Balthasar's theology . . . and of St. Paul's Letter to the Romans.

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THIS TIME

Goo-Goo Time

James Nuechterlein

We are in the heart of an election season, which means we are also deep in goo-goo time.

Goo-goos are people who believe that political process determines political substance. (In the nineteenth century the original goo-goos—the term came from "good government"—persuaded themselves that American democracy could be cleansed and redeemed only if civil service reform triumphed over political patronage. Today's goo-goos believe much the same about campaign finance reform.) Goo-goos then and now are terribly earnest about politics, and their earnestness is never more in evidence than during political campaigns. They actually worry about things—voter apathy, say, or whether the media have given sufficient attention to the difference between Al Gore's targeted tax cuts and George Bush's across-the-board rate reductions—that normal people regard with glazed-eye indifference. They are also purveyors of a number of pious myths about American politics.

Chief among those myths is that of the independent voter. Although most goo-goos are in fact themselves liberals, they nonetheless cling to an ideal of political independence. The independent voters of the goo-goo imagination loathe partisanship. They vote the person and what he stands for, not the party, and if they vote for candidates of the same party more than twice in a row they start to worry about their political virtue. They vastly prefer not to register as either Republicans or Democrats, but if they feel they must, they are, of course, *thoughtful* Republicans or Democrats, which means that nothing gives them more righteous pleasure than voting against their party's candidate.

Independent voters never decide their vote until late in the campaign (except, of course, under those rare circumstances when they encounter an independent candidate). They watch all the debates—keeping throughout, needless to say, an open mind—and they pore over issue papers with relentless determination: independent voters are, above all else, well informed. They pride themselves on paying no attention to the polls, and they regret that so many people get caught up in personalities rather than issues. They suspect that those who know whom they will vote for from the outset of the campaign, or who, heaven forfend, vote automatically for their party's candidate, are simply not, well . . . *thoughtful.*

There's just one problem with the independent voter. He doesn't exist. Well, all right, there are 270 million Americans, and no doubt in remote corners of this vast republic you will encounter people who more or less fit the profile sketched above. But if not nonexistent, they are rare—as any informed student of American politics will tell you.

Compared to their partisan fellow citizens, real independents (as opposed to the mythic variety) are ill-informed, indifferent to political discourse, and disinclined to vote. They decide late about voting because they don't like politics and don't pay attention to political campaigns. When they decide, if they decide, they tend to do so for vague or frivolous reasons—and those are often personal rather than substantive. ("I just don't like the way he looks"; "she reminds me of my first wife.") They are typically skeptical about politics—"politicians are all alike and you can't trust any of them"—but that skepticism usually is based more in unreflective folk cynicism than in genuine knowledge or experience of the political process.

Goo-goo fantasies to the contrary notwithstanding, the real stalwarts of American politics are those whose partisan loyalties are most deeply engaged. Strong partisans are, politically speaking, good citizens. They know the issues, actively follow campaign developments, and almost always vote. They do not, it is true, maintain "open minds." They know very early on in any election cycle who they will vote for. A great many of them, indeed, ignore the cardinal rule of goo-goo political virtue and vote unfailingly for the candidate of their party.

They act as they do not because they are not thoughtful, but precisely because they have thought a lot about politics—usually for a long time—and have arrived at a stable set of beliefs. In the overwhelming majority of cases, those belief patterns can be defined, roughly speaking at least, as either liberal or conservative, which means they fit more comfortably within, respectively, the Democratic or the Republican party. (It is only radicals of right or left who consider Republicans and Democrats as Tweedledum and Tweedledee.)

People who have thought seriously about politics *should* vote consistently: our political ideas arrange themselves in clusters, not random patterns. Those who distribute their votes more or less equally between Republicans and Democrats are in most cases people for whom politics is a marginal concern.

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Strong partisans do their political agonizing not in general elections, where the choice for them is normally a no-brainer, but in primary campaigns, where they may have to choose among a variety of candidates who to varying degrees share their political values.

Precisely because they are settled in their own views, partisans do not share the goo-goo preoccupation with "the issues." They know, in broad outline, where they stand and where the parties stand, and so do not need to read through the fine print in party platforms or candidates' position papers. They know, in the present instance, that for all their feints to the center, on most issues most of the time Al Gore is reliably liberal and George Bush reliably conservative. Thus they watch the debates not to find out where the candidates stand but to cheer their man on and see how he stands up to his opponent. Similarly, they avidly look to the media not for "in-depth coverage" of competing details on social security reform or how to deal with the surplus but for the latest gossip on who's ahead and why. They are unashamed in their preoccupation with the horse race.

They also break with goo-goo norms when it comes to political advertising, a subject so awash in hypocrisy it can scarcely be discussed. All parties and all candidates swear never, ever to run negative ads, and they virtually all do so, usually with the excuse that they were forced to the unfortunate deed only in retaliation. The politicians' hypocrisy follows from the public's prior hypocrisy. Voters insist that they hate negative ads, and why wouldn't they? Negative ads are, after all, negative, and it is generally not thought positive to be negative. But most strong partisans will confess, under less than heavy questioning, their secret delight in ads that effectively zing the opposition. My guess is that on this matter, as on so much else, most American voters practice their political faith as partisans even as they profess the goo-goo creed.

The problem with goo-goos, at bottom, is that they want a politics without partisanship, which is to say, in reality, that they do not want politics at all. Come, let us reason together, they say, and all will be well. Would that we were that reasonable, and that the world were so nicely amenable to reason. FT

Shakespearean Variation 1

From fairest creatures we desire increase
That being fat they may before they die
Have such *avoirdupois* that at decease
They'll make a greater claim on memory—
Dew-lapped, lids heavy, pouched eyes,
Poly-chinned, their engine full of fuel
And bellied to obscure the land that lies
Unseen beneath their feet. And is it cruel
To wish that they should cease to ornament
The race, become autumnal, forsake the spring,
That they might share our envious discontent,
Who will not be at table so niggarding.
Ah love, I really do not wish to be
Resentful of thy thinness but would fatten thee.

Ralph McInerny

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Opinion

For Useless Learning

Peter J. Leithart

In an essay written during World War II, C. S. Lewis raised the question of learning during wartime. What, he asked, is the use of pursuing arcane knowledge when the world is collapsing about us? Isn't this like fiddling while Rome burns? Since I teach at a Christian liberal arts college, this question is as forceful for me today as it was when Lewis posed it. We are, if you believe the pundits and sociologists, in the midst of a battle for the heart of American society and morals, a "culture war" in which the future of America lies in the balance. But in the midst of this battle, the faculty and students of my college are, in quite peaceful circumstances, devoting themselves to the study of old books, poetry, music, history, and theology. Why aren't we doing something more to help save America?

One might argue that diligent study of classics gives us a wisdom that will help to engage in cultural battles more effectively. This argument could be mounted, but it would not be very convincing, for the learned are notoriously clumsy in the practical world of political conflict. Some would argue that exposure to the best that has been thought and said will help to form moral and civic virtues, but if the twentieth century taught us anything at all, it taught us that the most exquisite music and poetry can coexist quite peacefully with unimaginable brutality.

No, we must not respond to this criticism by seeking some use for the liberal arts. In fact, to defend the "usefulness" of the liberal arts is to accept the standards of our critics, the criterion that judges every human pursuit by its economic, political, or personal usefulness. If we do this, we lose the argument before we begin. We must concede that the liberal arts are, at least by all normal standards, useless.

But we must go further than concession: we must be willing to celebrate this uselessness. Lewis points out that there is always some crisis, some alarm that demands our attention; there are always a million and one things more important than reading Homer. Yet we continue to read Homer because we are not creatures whose behavior is solely guided by a crabbed criterion of usefulness. We are creatures made in the image of a Creator who makes things that He does not need, things that are not of use to Him. As we imitate His excess, we play music and recite poetry and tell stories—and organize liberal arts colleges so others can do these things with us. The liberal arts are useless in the same way that the centerpiece on a dining room table is useless; useless in the way a silk tie is useless; useless in the way salt and pepper are useless; useless in the way that perfecting a golf swing is useless; useless in the same way that most of what makes life rich and beautiful is useless. We should not be ashamed of the uselessness of the liberal arts, for making what we do not need, and doing what we have no ordinary use for, is part of the glory of being made in the image of the infinitely creative God.

Liberal arts education, more particularly, is useless in the sense that however far we progress we are always only beginners. Students at my college spend four years reading thousands of pages of history, theology, and literature; learning logic and rhetoric; studying Greek and Latin and in some cases Hebrew. For all this time and effort, they have read a tiny fraction of a fraction of a fraction of what there is to read, and they know an even smaller percentage of what there is to know. If our graduates have an ounce of pride in their accomplishments, they have learned nothing at all. If they think they have "mastered" anything, they have surely failed to master the one needful thing. Perhaps here, at least, we can find a real use for liberal education. Knowledge can puff us with pride, but if it is received rightly, a liberal education inculcates at least one virtue: the master virtue of humility.

If education were nothing more than initiation into the liberal arts, I could end here, singing anti-utilitarian psalms and hymns and spiritual songs from now to the end of time. But the college where I teach is also striving to be something more: it is also, and above all, a Christian college, a college in which every discipline is grounded in God's revelation in His Word; a college that seeks, by the grace of God, to see this Word planted and nurtured and watered so that it will produce abundant fruit; a college whose confession is that Jesus Christ has been exalted high above all rule and authority, all power and dominion, even all art and poetry.

This additional factor changes the whole equation. Because what we are seeking above all is a deeper desire and knowledge of God and His Word, we have reason to hope that our students will grow in wisdom, as they come to know the God who is His wisdom. In this context, and only in this context, the liberal arts themselves become what the older theologians called

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ancillae theologiae, handmaidens of the knowledge of God. Teaching history becomes teaching the mighty acts of God; languages are taught so students can gain a more accurate grasp of the Word that brings life; philosophy and science provoke wonder at God's creation; we study poetry to learn to read Psalms and Proverbs with understanding; we learn to read music and sing so that we offer a sacrifice of praise. Liberal studies can thus be shaped into instruments of worship, even as the ancient Israelites shaped the gold and jewels of Egypt into a tabernacle.

Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes that all is vanity, and this vanity encompasses the making of and devotion to books. Devotion to liberal arts is no more vain than any other human pursuit, but neither is it any less vain. But though vanity and vapor, it is the labor that God has set in our hands, whether for a time or for a lifetime. And we can enjoy it in Him and enjoy Him in it. "Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting," Solomon wrote, "to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labors in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward. . . . He will not often consider the years of his life, because God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart" (Ecclesiastes 5:18, 20).

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The Human Genome in Human Context

Stephen M. Barr

On June 26, two teams of scientists announced jointly that they had virtually completed the task of mapping the human genome. The announcement was made at a White House ceremony featuring the President of the United States, the Prime Minister of England, and the heads of the two teams. The following day, the banner headline in the *New York Times* read, "Genetic Code of Human Life is Cracked by Scientists." The *Times* devoted ten full pages to the subject. *Time* magazine made it the cover story. The *Wall Street Journal* opined, "This is truly big stuff."

Though big stuff, it was really not a big discovery or even big news. That there is such a thing as a human genome and what it does have been known for several decades; and the project to map it, which is now all but complete, was initiated ten years ago. The mapping of the human genome is a milestone, not a breakthrough.

In spite of the hoopla and hype attending the announcement, much of the media commentary and analysis was reasonably sober and matter of fact. It focused chiefly on the anticipated benefits to biology and medicine, which are indeed potentially immense. These include a much greater understanding of the processes of life, and the prediction, treatment, and cure of many diseases. Amidst all the justified celebration, however, some darker notes were sounded. President Clinton warned that in using future discoveries "we must . . . not retreat from our oldest and most cherished human values." Francis Fukuyama, writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, expected that "we probably won't like the answers" that genome research will give to age-old questions. The editors of that paper agreed and suggested that future findings may "stand many of our beliefs on their heads." Articles in the *New York Times*, while mostly optimistic, also warned of the "risks" and "temptations" that would come with progress.

What are those risks, temptations, and frightening answers? The perceived dangers of genetic research fall into several categories, ranging from the practical to the apocalyptic. At the practical end are issues relating to medical privacy, the insurability of people with genetically identifiable risks for disease, and the use of genetic information "to stigmatize or discriminate against individuals or groups," as President Clinton put it.

Still at the practical level, but reaching much deeper, are a host of fears surrounding the "genetic engineering" of human beings. Here there are at least three dangers. First, there is the possibility that social imbalances may arise as the result of parents "improving," "enhancing," or even designing their own offspring. Lee Silver, professor of biology at Princeton University and author of *Remaking Eden*, has warned that the technology of inserting genes into fertilized eggs—which he calls "reprogenetics"—will lead to a two-tier society: the "GenRich," who can afford to genetically enrich their children, and the "Naturals," who can't and will be left behind. Aside from such egalitarian concerns, there is the possibility that human genetic engineering will simply skew the human gene pool. As some traits are selected for, other traits that are less obviously desirable, or less understood, or more subtle, but nevertheless needed by society, may inadvertently be selected against.

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A second danger of the engineering of humans is that it will profoundly change the relationship between parent and child. The child who is designed by his parents is in some measure made, not begotten, and becomes no longer a given to be accepted, but an invention, a technical artifact.

The third and most fearsome danger is that this kind of genetic control will eventually lead to the radical transformation of the human species itself. In the words of Fukuyama, "The way is then open to superseding the human race with something different." Indeed, the prophecy of Prof. Silver is that the Gen-Rich and the Naturals will form not two social classes, but two distinct human *species*. As the scientist and futurist Freeman Dyson observes in *The Sun, the Genome, and the Internet*, "When we have mastered the technology of reprogenetics, we shall be creating our own genetic barriers, not in opposition to nature, but enabling the natural processes of human evolution to continue." In *Imagined Worlds*, Dyson develops this scenario further: "The process of speciation, the division of our species into many varieties . . . , will then be under way. . . . The most serious conflicts of the next thousand years will probably be biological battles, fought between different conceptions of what a human being ought to be."

Aside from what it will allow mankind to do to itself, genetic research may also alter the way humanity thinks about itself. Philosophers will certainly be tempted to demystify man, seeing people as mere sequences of digits that can be stored in a database rather than as beings made in the image of God with immortal souls. (The old fear of "becoming a statistic," a number in a file, would then be realized in a way more awful and profound than anyone expected.) This view will feed belief in genetic determinism, already a common response to the news of June 26. One of the cherished beliefs that the *Wall Street Journal* foresees being stood on its head is "the idea that man can choose between right and wrong." The "answer" that Fukuyama says "we probably won't like" is that "we are much less free to choose our destinies" than we thought. Even more radically, the knowledge of the human genome may further the already pronounced trend toward a materialistic view of man, the view that we are at bottom naught but "a fortuitous concourse of atoms."

In the face of all these threats to humanity should we panic? I do not think so. Or at least, if we do panic, it should not be because of knowing the genome.

First, we should keep in mind that in a certain sense the remaking of man has been going on since the Stone Age. Genetic engineering might be used, say, to increase our powers of sight. But we have done that already with the invention of eyeglasses, telescopes, binoculars, magnifying glasses, microscopes, infrared scopes, and countless other devices. Genetic engineering may or may not lead to supermen, but we already have X-ray vision; we just don't carry it around with us.

It might be objected that I have given examples of mere sensory enhancements, not improvements in mental abilities. But memory is a key mental ability, and many inventions have enhanced that power: writing, books, printing, photography, tape recorders, and moving pictures, to name but a few. This shows why remodeling human beings—even if possible—is unlikely in itself to radically change our lives. Enhancements in human abilities that may come through genetic engineering will in most cases be negligible compared to those already achieved, or achievable in the future, through tools.

Suppose we can make the average man able to run a three-minute mile. What is that when he can go much faster with a bicycle or car? Or suppose we can give each man the strength of Samson? What is that compared to what he can do with a forklift truck? It is true that genetic engineering can make the changes directly into the human body. But that too has been done, albeit by cruder methods. Will men want bigger biceps, abs, and lats? There are exercise machines and creatine. Will women want bigger breasts? There are silicone implants.

As far as fears that human beings will end up evolving themselves into shapes unrecognizable, this ignores the human hunger for normality. Breast implants, for example, have not led to breasts of ever increasing size. Contrary to Mae West's famous dictum, too much of a good thing is *not* necessarily wonderful, or perceived as such. To pursue the example of body shape further, there are biological factors that condition what we want. Cross-cultural studies have shown, for instance, that the ideal female waist-to-hip ratio in the eyes of men is 0.7, and the ideal male waist-to-hip ratio in the eyes of women is 0.9. Biologists believe that there are evolutionary reasons for these inborn preferences. What this suggests, rather than a danger of going to extremes, is a danger of too much normality. It is not just inborn preference that favors the mean, but practicality. Being seven feet tall is an asset in the NBA, but a disadvantage almost everywhere else. Most parents will not want that for their children.

Of course, there are some things of which more *is* always better, such as talent or intelligence. And it is precisely the mental remaking of man that provokes the greatest worry. Will man, in attempting to improve himself mentally, turn himself into a creature altogether different psychologically, emotionally, aesthetically, morally, and spiritually—a creature no longer human?

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There is reason to doubt the possibility of such a hideous outcome. What militates against it is the sheer difficulty of achieving a radical transformation of human nature. It should be appreciated to begin with that we have *not* come anywhere near to "cracking" the human genetic code, the headline in the *Times* notwithstanding. To "crack" the genetic code would involve three levels of understanding: of the human organism and its mechanisms down to the cellular level; of the developmental processes by which the structures of the body and brain are built up; and of the way in which these developmental processes are guided by the information encoded in the genome.

Suppose, for instance, one wanted to engineer into a person some radically new mental power, such as the ability to visualize five-dimensional shapes and diagrams. This would be very useful in many kinds of mathematical, scientific, and technical work. First, one would have to understand the neural paths involved in our present powers of visualization. Then one would have to invent new circuitry for the brain and find the developmental steps by which it could actually produce such circuitry. And finally, one would have to figure out genetic instructions to get those steps to take place. To state the task is to see its impossibility.

What we might really be able to do is either imitate what nature already knows how to do, or use trial and error, as nature did, to learn to do new things. By comparing the genomes of people with different athletic abilities, for instance, we can perhaps learn how to enhance athletic ability. Or we can learn tricks from the genomes of other species. But imitation of existing models will not bring great improvements in, say, human intellectual powers, since there are no models of higher intellect in nature to imitate. We might try to use geniuses as models, but it is foolish to suppose that by rooting around in the genome we will ever find out why Mozart wrote greater music than Salieri, or why Aquinas had more profound ideas than A. J. Ayer.

Nor will we make supermen by trial and error. The trouble is that almost all the trials will be errors, given the immense complexity of human beings. The problem is compounded by the fact that the relation of genes to traits is not one-to-one. Some traits are influenced by many genes, and some genes influence many traits. The law of unintended consequences is therefore bound to operate with a vengeance. The full results of some genetic "improvements" may only become evident a generation or two later, when it will be much too late. People will not long tolerate the succession of mental freaks and failures that will result from trying to engineer the human mind.

The bad news here is also, in a way, good news: man lacks not only the wisdom to play God, but also the intelligence. It is blasphemous and wicked to try to outdo God's work in creating man, but it will also prove to be futile, since we are no more up to the job technically than we are morally. In *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII observed, in regard to socialism's utopian schemes, that "all striving against Nature is vain." That is still true. Socialism failed to create the promised New Man, and the new eugenics will fail just as surely. We can only pray that the toll of suffering brought on by human arrogance and folly will be less horrible this time around.

In the meantime we should recognize that many of the evils that are discussed hypothetically in connection with genetic engineering are already upon us. Children are already being manufactured using in vitro fertilization, surrogate mothers, and sperm banks. Fertilized human eggs are put into cold storage or disposed of as waste products of the child-manufacturing process. People right now are designing their offspring by means of donated eggs or sperm. True, the present methods are technically crude, but the technically most sophisticated methods aren't always the most widely employed. In the half century in which we have had nuclear weapons, they have killed fewer people than were slaughtered in Rwanda over a few months with machetes and clubs.

Genetic engineering will indeed skew the human gene pool, but we have been doing that for thirty years by means of contraception with hardly anyone raising a cry of protest. In every developed country today, the most talented and the most intelligent are having far fewer children than average. This is an unprecedented genetic experiment on a massive scale, whose dysgenic effects will surely swamp any "positive" results that eugenicists could hope to achieve.

Finally, it seems safe to say that just as in the long run the utopian fantasy of genetic engineering will wither in the light of scientific reality, so will the philosophical fantasy of genetic determinism. In fact, there is already quite conclusive evidence that human behavior, though strongly conditioned by genetics, is not completely determined by it. The identical twins of homosexuals, for instance, have only a 50 percent chance of being homosexual themselves. And even statistical correlations as high as 50 percent do not imply causation. Certain genes may be correlated with a kind of sensitivity that makes one more susceptible to environmental influences in favor of being an artist, say, or a hairdresser, or a homosexual. That would not be the same as a "gay gene," or a "hairdresser gene," or an "art gene." And even if genes do control certain of our *inclinations*, it does not follow that they therefore control our *behavior*.

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Valid or not, the philosophical conclusions that are drawn from science often depend on what people want to believe. Some, for instance, will point, as President Clinton did, to the fact that all human beings genetically overlap by 99.9 percent as proof that we all have equal human dignity. Others, with as much or as little logic, will argue from the 98 percent genetic overlap of humans and chimpanzees that we have no special dignity at all. In short, the genome can tell us much about ourselves, but not the most important things. Genetics will not answer philosophical questions, nor will genetic engineering make us better philosophers. There is no wisdom gene. One safe prediction, therefore, is this: after all eugenic efforts have been made, the amount of human folly, and the suffering it brings, will be as great as ever.

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Shakespearean Variation 9

Is it for fear to wet a widow's eye
That you cling tenaciously to life?
Or is determination not to die
Aimed at yourself instead of at your wife?
Do you fear that, mourning, she would weep
Because your dying left her here behind
With only fading memories to keep?
More likely you would soon be out of mind
For grief is but a meager hoard to spend
And in a month she'd have no more of it.
Her sorrow, thanks to time, will have an end
And she will soon forget the reason of it.
So linger on as by your bed she sits;
Impatience is the sin that she commits.

Ralph McInerny

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Populism and Parental Choice

John E. Coons

Civility is breaking out in a hotly contested sector of the culture war. For thirty years armies of authors have savaged one another over whether society should assure have-not families free access to all schools. The claims made for and against subsidized school choice have been extravagant, which is good reason to welcome the publication of serious and balanced works—four of which I will consider in the course of my argument—from mainstream intellectuals. These voices, though tentative and discordant, all respond to the insight emergent among the urban poor and working class—that parental choice is an issue of civil rights and basic justice.

To appreciate the four books under discussion (there are others deserving attention) requires first an orienting bit of ideological history, telling how we got here, and then some idea of where the discussion seems headed. This debate remains hobbled, as we shall see, by the widespread but false assumption that our state schools currently provide a truly "public" education. Nonetheless, these new developments are promising—the populist impulse behind school choice may yet receive its fair hearing.

For practical purposes the debate on parental choice began in 1960 with Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom.* The book was a libertarian manifesto, an apotheosis of the market; in education as elsewhere Friedman portrayed consumer freedom as virtually a good in itself. Almost immediately, however, welfare politics reduced Friedman's ideas to instrumental status, as liberal Democrats seized upon vouchers as a weapon to be wielded in the War on Poverty. As a result, the literature on school choice was for a decade suffused with a practical and fabian tone. The primary issue for welfare warriors Stephen Sugarman, Christopher Jencks, and Stephen Arons was to specify institutional designs whereby choice in both private and public sectors could help non-rich families rescue their children from conscription into failed schools. At one memorable moment, Daniel P. Moynihan suggested that Congress convert federal educational subventions into vouchers for the poor.

The Democratic flirtation with the idea eventually fizzled, leaving it to economists to raise the banner of school choice. It happened this way: in the 1970s, as economic theory became the darling of policy makers, the understanding of the market as just one practical tool among others lost center stage. The freedom to choose was elevated from a means to an end, subsuming arguments specific to school choice under the same justifications offered for the deregulation of banks and airlines. Along with travel and finance, schools were another consumer service in which competition and creative destruction were to reduce friction. Milton Friedman seemed to have enjoyed his libertarian revenge.

Government educators and their unions shrewdly perceived this as a political opportunity; they simply confirmed and then exaggerated this truncated image of a market for schools. The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers would concede that the invisible hand, in its Darwinian fashion, might achieve more efficient delivery. What it could not do, they said, is tell society what it would be good to deliver. Their favorite comparison was between franchised schools and franchised hamburgers. Education is not like fast food or airlines, they rightly pointed out; it has values apart from personal

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preference, and professionals not subject to market pressures know what these are.

The debate between the marketeers and the school monopoly sputtered on in this polarized and vacuous form through the late 1980s. The economists wrote books about efficiency, and the schoolmasters responded with books about democracy, as if the two were oil and water. The marketeers compounded their own isolation by rejecting overtures from liberal Democrats who believed that school choice could be presented as a hope for the underclass. In four states and the District of Columbia, libertarians sent initiatives to the ballot after stripping them of all regulation that would protect low-income families—a condition for the support of moderates, who now stood aside. Albert Shanker once expressed to me his delight at this self-marginalization of advocates for choice; he accurately forecast that only 30 percent of voters would support the libertarian petards.

The phony polarity of this debate has now disappeared in light of the extremely promising Milwaukee voucher program and its sequels outside Wisconsin. With some real experiences to study, we are once again able to ask whether school choice, properly designed, can serve *a range* of democratic and human values—including efficiency—in a manner superior to the traditional school monopoly. Our four authors approach this question directly and indirectly, in ways that conflict but also illuminate. The first two come upon the stage expressly as "liberal" philosophers; for them this word has ultimate moral significance. Once you understand what is truly liberal, you know what to do with the schools.

Indeed, Meira Levinson aggressively entitles her book *The Demands of Liberal Education* (Oxford University Press, 250 pp., $35). To understand how liberalism gets so demanding the reader must join the author inside the unisphere of modern liberal thought. "I have not tried to convince individuals of the desirability of liberalism itself," she writes. "I took liberalism as a given." Nevertheless, she is keen to distinguish herself from shipmates less correct, especially Rawlsian "political liberals" who tend to be soft on the sorts of ideological crime that swarm out there in a pluralist society. She seems more comfortable around "comprehensive liberals," who might hope to extend their influence beyond the public square. It would take a more perceptive reviewer to tell the differences among the sects. Here I focus only upon her institutional ideal for delivering education in the liberal mode. Its real-life chances are zero, but the view is instructive.

Levinson tells the reader that the core purpose of liberal education is the flourishing of personal autonomy; all else is subordinate. Happily, other benign civic ideals such as tolerance are also best served by the liberal program of schooling as it goes about the nourishing of autonomy. The embodiment of that program in a working system becomes quite complex in a pluralist social order, because there are versions of the good life and the civic ideal that compete with the liberal vision. That is, they rest upon philosophical or religious premises that reject the right of the individual to choose his or her own concept of the good. Much of the book is given over to lamenting irreconcilable conflicts between certain Christians (especially "fundamentalists") and the author's own liberal "demands." These practical threats from the Christians are largely unspecified but, for her purpose, may remain so. It is enough that these religious folk would hold the free individual child responsible to an external moral authority; parental hopes of this sort could never satisfy the ideal of autonomy, hence are properly (could one say "morally"?) excluded from the liberal curriculum.

But Levinson sees that childhood complicates the liberal ideal. Children stand in special need of liberal protection; yet their very autonomy requires resources that are hard to duplicate outside the family. These include not only the means of survival and safety, but the "cultural coherence" and "identity" that make us real persons. This seems a dilemma, for when parents are allowed to create the coherence that comes simply from being themselves, they notoriously thwart autonomy and frustrate little liberal identities.

The best a liberal can do is to limit these opportunities for parents to act as bearers of specifically illiberal ideas, while educating the society toward the emergence of a new social consciousness (even among parents) that will support the assignment of every child to a "common school," meaning one that presents every reasonable idea—but no other. These schools, when they arrive, will interdict all "fundamental conceptions of the good," for autonomy requires the "sense of detachment," even—or especially—from one's own beliefs; the autonomous child is one who holds his own convictions in constant and liberating suspension, "detached from local and parental control."

This regime need not entail complete neglect of the child's need for "cultural coherence"; again, the family must be respected in some dimension if the child's identity is to be confirmed. This is not impossible even in a pluralist society, so long as the liberal school confirms only that part of the family repertoire which is neither philosophically nor religiously fundamental. This means that some families will have few or none of their values confirmed inside the school; but many children from these morally oppressive home environments may discover a coherence and identity—a substitute family—right there in the school.

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The liberal educator anticipates that families who are diverse in belief will value choice in education. To a degree, this impulse can be good, since individual children respond differently to different teaching methods in the pursuit of autonomy. There is reason, then, to allow pedagogical options—even through vouchers—so long as all schools embrace the liberal curriculum of sound ideas. Of course, as Levinson laconically observes, there would be "little if anything to distinguish private" from state schools. And, by the way, with or without vouchers, she would impose regulation upon all private schools so as to secure the liberal objective, and would "embed children's rights to an autonomy-promoting education in the Constitution." Meanwhile, Supreme Court decisions enunciating parental rights, such as *Pierce v. the Society of Sisters* (1925), must be "interpreted." In the end, she is happy, if necessary, to impose the liberal ideal by force, but for this we first "must change . . . beliefs and values." Levinson is certainly correct about the chasm between this vision and the hopes of those outside her liberal cloister. The book is heuristic and provocative. One wishes that Orwell could have read it.

Stephen Macedo holds the chair of Politics and Values at Princeton and returns to a favorite theme in his *Diversity and Dissent: Civic Education in a Multicultural Society* (Harvard University Press, 384 pp., $45). Like Ms. Levinson he resides under the dome of liberal thought and fears the influence of kerygmatic religion out there in the public square. Inside the fraternity he is distinguishable as a "civic liberal" whose stewardship of schools would be a hair more trusting of the poor and dissident than Levinson's. He hopes he is consistent with John Rawls' "political liberalism," but he "goes beyond" Rawls by specifying "an account of the political and social structures that help promote a publicly reasonable liberal community." Macedo's ambitions are cosmic: "We work to transform the whole of the moral world in the image of our most basic political values." One braces for a Big Bang, but the pace is measured.

The book commences with specifics about the threat to education from religion, at least in its historical forms. His flagship example is the rejection during the 1840s by New York's Catholic Archbishop John Hughes of a proposal for religious neutrality within the state schools. Hughes deemed neutrality unfair to believers and, in any case, impossible to achieve; the just and equitable solution, he said, would be the support of all ideas without discrimination. This was not to be, and, given mid-century fears of an impending "Romanist" majority in America, Macedo allows that the states' decision to monopolize tax-supported education could even be glossed as a hedge for freedom (i.e., from a foreign power). Macedo, however, does not bless the ensuing century of Protestant state curriculum, and carefully applauds the Catholic social outlook of our own time as it recrystalized in Vatican II. For this transformation of the Church he credits America herself, though just how a state school monopoly segregated by race and class helped Rome to see the light is unexplained.

For Macedo this nineteenth-century history stands principally as a cautionary tale for moderns, one in which Jerry Falwell is made to play Pius IX. Whatever the reality of the old Roman menace, Macedo's demonization of today's Christian enthusiasts seems farfetched, and he cites little evidence to support his argument. Both Levinson and Macedo make too much of a few publicized courtroom skirmishes, notably the federal litigation entitled *Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education.* In that case, fundamentalist parents in Tennessee discovered what they considered antireligious themes in the local public school curriculum. Like the Amish, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others before them, these plaintiffs were content to have the rest of the students learn the material, merely seeking an exemption for themselves. (They lost.) To conjure a threat to liberal values from a few such cases seems out of proportion.

In any case, religious dissenters make an odd primary target. How much, if at all, do these outliers and their beliefs contribute to our present culture of incivility? Most of America's anxieties in this area concern not bad beliefs but bad *conduct,* posing three very earthly—and earthy—questions for the educational mission: 1) What *behavior* is correct? 2) What *source,* if any, obliges humans to pursue it? 3) In cases of doubt, how does one reason toward it?

Unfortunately, these questions are alien to the liberal, at least in public space; these good deeds are not something to be identified in some pre-institutional order of real moral relations. Indeed, for many liberals the good is not a discovery at all, but rather the imaginative conception of some possible state that the individual may or may not choose to seek. The creative process begins for Macedo "by defining an objective human good." In this view, "the law is the only public morality we have."

This effort to detach the good from natural (much less religious) sources and from specific moral content is, of course, familiar. Liberals would have us invent the terms of public life without regard to conceptions of the good that are inaccessible to unaided reason. This does not mean that they are personally allergic to real morality. Indeed, in their families and private lives many treat proper conduct as if it were something nonnegotiable; it may be this experience of the authentic good that often makes the institutions that

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liberals propose more sensible than the arguments they offer for them. In any case, they need broad consent for their inventions; hence they often respect in practice the plebeian premise they reject in theory—that human freedom is a thing given and yet bounded.

Our authors nonetheless see parents in general as a threat to the primary liberal objective of autonomy. It follows that family dominion must be limited to a parental "privilege" coupled with the duty (not the right) to direct the quotidian details of childrearing. Meanwhile, in the school the state must stand vigilant to rescue the child's mind from commitment to every fundamental moral or religious conception, for these tend to become permanent premises that only frustrate the march toward autonomy. Neither author attaches particular value to a diversity of ideas, cultures, or ways of life; when the liberal school has its day, it will honor only those versions that meet the standard of "public reason."

In my view neither book makes enough of the poisonous effects of the present school monopoly upon the very values that liberals cherish. Nor does either author highlight the explosion of public charter schools; perhaps this new diversity only compounds the liberal fear. In these books, even talk of vouchers is brief. Levinson highlights criticisms from early studies of Milwaukee, neglecting the now dominant success stories. Macedo thinks that parental choice depletes our moral capital, while monopoly "helps to advance values." But he is far from closed-minded, and—having whispered "I will ne'er consent"—in the end consents to properly regulated vouchers even for religious schools that are not (in that happy phrase) "pervasively sectarian."

Turning to Rosemary C. Salomone provides something of a relief from ideology. Not that her book *Visions of Schooling: Conscience, Community, and Common Education* (Yale University Press, 352 pp., $30) is anything but liberal in spirit or content; indeed, she appreciates Macedo's earlier work, and she can recite the orthodoxies of the liberal sects. But she is not herself anxious to satisfy any litmus test or to privilege one authentic version of the creed. Indeed, *Visions* is more a story—even a pageant—than a unified theory. It is a well-tempered tale of ideas at war over the concept of a common school.

From the beginning, Salomone says, certain American educators wanted the state school "to be inclusive by being uncontroversial"; for others public education was to practice straightforward "imposition and indoctrination." Yet a few others hoped the school might be diverse and inviting to all ideas. What was common to neutralists, inculcators, and eclectics was the impulse to disconnect the child from the lower-class family. We hear from Salomone how these contrasting and harmonizing aspirations played out in prolonged ideological struggle inside and outside (and for and against) the public monopoly.

This is an oft-told tale but includes new insight from two resources specific to the author. One is her professional grasp of the constitutional principles at stake; she is a professor of law at St. John's University in New York and in full command of the legal sources as well as the many sub-*isms* of liberal philosophy. The other is her book's initial inspiration; it rises out of Salomone's earlier study of an outbreak in the 1990s of parental dissent in the patrician New York suburb of Bedford. A long chapter of *Visions* summarizes this story, and the five chapters preceding it are an artful Baedeker to the incubating theories of lawyers, philosophers, educators, and dissident families that met head-on in the Bedford high school.

The objecting parents in this tale cooperate with central casting by being Christian—but with a twist. These are not Appalachian fundamentalists but a half dozen suburban Catholic professionals. I won't spoil the story, but in brief these parents think that weird cultic stuff is going on at the elegant state school their children attend. They are partly right but wind up with most citizens mad at them, including the trial judge who gives them only a partial victory in litigation. (The case is now on appeal.)

The Bedford story confirms the ubiquity of conflict and ideological imposition within the traditional governmental schools, and not only over specifically religious issues. Such conflicts seem inevitable to Salomone, who tends to picture tax-supported schools as a unitary ideological system that must cope with a diverse clientele. She considers one remedy that might heal and justify the old monolith: simple accommodation, where schools excuse dissenters from the offending portions of the curriculum. To this reader her argument here seems (properly) half-hearted and even despairing; in any case it ends in a near requiem for the "neighborhood school as [representative] of a functional community." She sees now that America has succeeded in creating ideological diversity even among the wealthy—one size can never fit all—and she lacks Levinson's stomach for universal coercion.

Or does she? In the end, as her preferred solution, Salomone would extend a more or less uniform state curriculum to the private sector but now within a system of choice—charters and vouchers. She would include only those religious schools "that agree to advance certain core political principles and comply with educational standards imposed by the state to assure . . . adequate education for democratic citizenship." This uniform civic curriculum is, she thinks, "a relatively modest" proposal, but one wonders. It

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appears that she would add materially to the regulations that now affect private schools; but it is not made clear how these new restrictions would enhance the learning and good citizenship of their graduates. The social science of today tells us that these youngsters are already distinctly civil—at least by state school standards.

On this very note enter Charles L. Glenn, who, from a rather different planet, brings us *The Ambiguous Embrace: Government and Faith-Based Schools and Social Agencies* (Princeton University Press, 304 pp., $35). Glenn is an inner-city Episcopalian priest, a professor of comparative education at Boston University, and a father of seven. For many years he was chief designer and administrator of successful programs of racial integration in public schools that employ various mechanisms of choice. He is also our national guru on European systems of family empowerment. His new book is an invitation—enthusiastic and even (in some sense) liberal—to trust the family and its favored private institutions; but it is also, and first of all, a warning. Glenn dons the role of sentry for those private religious schools that Salomone and Macedo are prepared to embrace. He plays Cassandra, not as a bureaucrat manqué (he is unrepentant), but as a prudent steward of precious but fragile institutions.

Glenn first assembles and analyzes whatever social science has to tell us about the responses made by two sorts of religious institutions—schools and social agencies—to their experience of government regulation, money, or both. To this he adds fresh historical accounts of two prominent Protestant agencies, the Salvation Army and Teen Challenge (a drug recovery program); carefully he assesses their adjustments to public threats and enticements. All this is further enriched by recurrent comparisons of these domestic American encounters to European patterns of interrelation between private religious agencies and governments.

The evidence strongly suggests that faith-based social agencies and schools serve certain governmental social goals better than can government itself. Our national project to "reinvent government" thus should seek out the genius of those "mediating institutions" that happen to be religious. They affirm in their nature the transcendent duty of the Christian to serve the common good through the church and thus—*ceteris paribus*—the duty to be open to service within government programs of contracting, grants, vouchers, and the like.

Glenn's caveat is this: the efficacy of religious agents appears to be a direct function of maintaining their identity; they succeed at the secular task precisely when they conduct their work without suppressing their own beliefs, values, or confessional style. Liaison with government can threaten this religious identity through clumsy regulation. The federal "charitable choice" provisions presently assure some measure of religious freedom to private social agencies; strangely, however, there is no constitutional or statutory counterpart in education. Religious schools must beware the sirens of subsidized choice.

Nor is government itself even the chief source of danger. Glenn shows that the identity of religious agencies and schools is vulnerable, first and foremost, to standards touted by private professionals. Their impulse to rationalize and regulate charitable work is plausible and hard to resist even *inside* the religious organization. It goes down hard with professionals (and their sometime government sponsors) to hear that, for many clients, therapeutic programs work precisely because they deploy the enthusiasm and spontaneity of amateurs. Glenn allows that professionalism must be respected; the trick is to regulate minimally and in a manner that preserves the religious identity of the provider.

Glenn makes his warning vivid with a scattering of statistics and a few horror stories of virtual capitulation by religious providers. However, he never retracts or dilutes the imperative—itself religious—that under the right conditions these institutions be ready to serve the common good. Nor, on the other hand, is he fazed by the specter of "cults" and "sects" that haunts our liberal authors. Here our national experience with the regulation of hate groups and racists is relevant. In any school voucher scheme, Glenn would limit participation to schools that respect the norms of racial neutrality, civil order, and the rule of law. Regarding curriculum, the standards now governing private schools are sufficient; as for the rest, little more is needed beyond certain protections for the poor, namely admission and tuition rules plus transportation and information guarantees of the sort presently embodied and operating successfully in the low-income programs of Wisconsin, Ohio, and Florida. Private schools must also be allowed to apply religious criteria in hiring; the point always is to maintain identity.

The reader will apply his or her own standard in assessing the individual merits of these very different books. But all four can be recommended for their relative candor and balance, qualities sometimes wanting in the literature of school reform. Each of the books, moreover, is a step—in Glenn's case a substantial and enthusiastic step—toward greater trust of ordinary people and their mediating institutions.

Nevertheless, I am puzzled by two qualities of the writing (though I now spot them in my own). One is the apologetic air with which all but Glenn peck tentatively at the issue of state dominion over children, especially the children of the poor; at the same time,

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by contrast, every small concession to parental choice is accompanied by worries of an educational Munich. The other odd note, possibly related, is the relative neglect in books otherwise so professional of the more scholarly arguments for choice. When, as here, skeptics make concessions to choice, one would expect strong justifying reasons. But, apart from Glenn, the rationales are principally that the Constitution allows it, that dissenters will be grateful, and that competition may improve test scores in the state schools. That choice would empower the non-rich is grudgingly agreed, but such freedom for parents is met with faint praise.

If choice comes, is it to be tolerated simply as an efficiency device and/or a concession to popular whim? Or are there strong positive arguments? Offhand I can think of over two dozen; most could be arrayed in categories such as these: *practical* arguments about measurable elements such as test scores; *vocational* considerations such as the elevation of teaching to professional status; *intellectual* values that insist upon a free market for ideas held by the poor; *child welfare* claims about the best decider of the right school for this individual child; the *autonomy* argument that it is the empowered family, not the state, that best nourishes the independent self; *tolerance* theory holding that social trust among groups is maximized when family identity is respected by government; arguments from *justice* that would end the system of conscriptive school assignment focused upon the poor; arguments for *racial integration* founded upon a new freedom of association across arbitrary government boundaries; and *family* theory which understands the corrosive effect of losing responsibility for one's own children.

Why are these categories of justification largely ignored? I suspect that most of us who are not libertarians have come to the school question wearing an ideological blinker: there is a diverting myth that remains a confounding premise for those who write about education. This is the widespread assumption that American state schools are functionally "public." For two reasons they do not merit the label, and this matters, for the false premise clouds all our judgments.

For a thing to be public, notes the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the first requirement is that it be "open to all" in the manner of the park, the pool, the library, the museum, the street, the square. But what Americans still call the "public" school is accessible only to its neighbors; to attend, one must first manage to live nearby. Stretching things one could, perhaps, say that the schools in poorer neighborhoods such as Watts are functionally "public" because most of us could afford to move there. But Beverly Hills we cannot save, for it is a legislated scheme of private choice that in effect peddles school vouchers in the housing market. The rich buy autonomy; the rest get conscripted. "Public?" To the contrary, the system is a balkanized plutocracy. This is the first abuse of this important word.

The second is more subtle; it is the unexamined premise of universality that is inserted into virtually all discourse on state schools. The word "public" is deployed to imply some intellectual unity that is a quality of the system. The *OED* recognizes such a restraint upon the use of the word: any conception offered as "public" must be "extended . . . or universal." Publicness entails a unity of informing spirit; in order to be truly "public" in the modern state an educational policy must be the declared and coherent enterprise of a people.

Intellectual coherence can, of course, inform a conception that is not yet complete, a work in progress. Such, perhaps, was the idea of state education in its first century. Its literature, though discordant, was united in its confidence (as in John Dewey) that the competing inspirations were all vectoring and that a common core could and would eventually be sculpted and realized as a truly *public* reality. If such a common vision still exists, it is a work in regress. What remains is a narrow core curriculum that pursues, first, the child's personal utility, and, second, the barest kind of social contract. State schools do all seek to raise test scores and teach the rule of law. Learn the skills, the sciences, and a little history; avoid committing crimes and torts. That much is coherent and universal, and thus is still truly "public." (Of course it is also part of the mission of every "private" school.)

But that's about it. Beyond these basics each state school stands on its own moral bottom, for there is no cultural agreement—no public gnosis—about what it is to be a good person, or what such a person should seek to realize as the common good. This is not an observation about religion, its sects, or its enemies. It is a claim about human conduct. To make this plainer, consider the range of contested moral questions on which individual educators must take a side—or simply avoid: animal rights, gender roles, obedience to parents, obedience to other adults, premarital chastity (and condoms), assisted suicide, pornography, economic justice, civil disobedience, the role of sports, ethnicity, abortion, environmental policy, gun control, cloning and genetic engineering, global capitalism, diet, free speech. Should P.S. 91 teach that homosexual conduct is good, bad, or a lifestyle option? Practical choices must be made concerning every such issue. And each question will be answered yes, no, or maybe, for even silence is a message. I have no advice on the right answers, but this I now see. Schools engage these questions differently from one another whether by a decision of the state, district, school, or

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teacher. Whose preference the individual child will encounter thus is determined more by chance than by any philosophy that could be called "public."

But add to these specific cases the grandest disagreement of them all. It concerns the very possibility of serious moral teaching. Is there a real good, or is social contract the only source of obligation? What sort of pre-institutional imperative, if any, is available to schools once they are forbidden to acknowledge religious foundations? Could natural law inform the curriculum of an Aristotle Charter High School? Perhaps, but even if enough of us could agree on the source of a natural morality, we would still divide over its specific applications, just as Robert P. George and Andrew Sullivan recently divided over its application to homosexual conduct.

To render coherent the debates on education we would need to give correct names to the phenomena at issue, exercising self-restraint in the use of "public." Beyond the basic curriculum no ideas presently qualify as such; what is taught is chosen according to the preferences of the individuals who happen to be in charge. Answers to contested questions always consist of somebody's *private* convictions. On such matters the public square of education is not merely naked; it is not even public. Thus it is that state schools like Beverly Hills which fail the criterion of free access also fail the test of universality; often they teach a variety of private moralities inside their own communities. In the rich suburbs this is by consent of the individual families who could, if they chose, flee to Santa Monica—or St. Mary's. In Watts, by contrast, the various private orthodoxies are simply imposed; whether the moral menu features sports, philanthropy, or zen, it is a dish du jour.

It has always been convenient to assume a vague state of neutral uniformity among state schools as a premise for our national conversation. In doing so myself I have too often miscast the message of the state educator as the "Vanilla curriculum." Many educators do serve vanilla; but clearly this is only one of several flavors. We need a more candid image of this uneven moral topography. My candidate is the Rocky Road curriculum; it may be laced with vanilla, but its soul is a particularity of hard chunks, marshmallows, and—for the connoisseur—nuts galore.

What exactly is the harm in such a government menagerie? The evil consists in the collaboration of this unprincipled diversity with a monopoly system of assignment for the ordinary citizen. Being choiceless, the non-rich family is conscripted for a moral lottery operating at its very un-public local school. But seeing this is halfway to fixing it. And ordinary Americans now seem to grasp the reality; observing the curriculum wars in the media they have come to understand their status as a captive audience for whatever gospel is delivered to their child. This populist insight could account for much of the huge shift of opinion toward subsidized choice among ordinary families, especially minorities. The poor do not fancy all the surprises their children now encounter in the Rocky Road curriculum. If my child is going to be taught somebody's pet ideas, that somebody might as well be me. FT

Shakespearean Variation 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day
As if indeed the time were temperate,
Although the month's December and not May,
And wishes could transport you to that date?
Shall I invent a summer sun that shines
Less brightly since its very light is dimmed
By yours and in embarrassment declines,
Defeated though your beauty's candle's trimmed?
Alas, my love, your beauty soon must fade
And pay the grim taxation that it owes,
Until your life is gone and you a shade,
Quite gone to seed like everything that grows.
But in that seed a promise dear I see,
And I would love to snuggle up with thee.

Ralph McInerny

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Conservatives, Darwin & Design: An Exchange

Larry Arnhart / Michael J. Behe / William A. Dembski

Larry Arnhart

One sign of the intellectual confusion among conservatives these days is that they cannot decide what to think about Charles Darwin. Some conservatives (such as Charles Murray and James Q. Wilson) appeal to Darwinian biology as showing how moral order is rooted in human nature. But others (such as William F. Buckley, Jr. and Andrew Ferguson) reject Darwinism as a form of scientific materialism that is morally corrupting.

Consider, for example, the conservative reaction to Francis Fukuyama's book *The Great Disruption.* Fukuyama used a Darwinian theory of human social behavior to support the conservative view that there really is a human nature that sets norms for social order, in contrast to the common view of cultural relativists that social rules are arbitrary constructions of cultural life. Fukuyama's book provoked a passionate rebuttal in the *Weekly Standard* from Andrew Ferguson, who warned conservatives that Darwinian science promotes a crude materialism that denies the freedom and dignity of human beings as moral agents. Peter Lawler, writing in *Modern Age,* agreed with Ferguson and even denounced Fukuyama as a "teacher of evil." Conservatives like Ferguson and Lawler are at least partially correct, because some Darwinians (Richard Dawkins, for example) do interpret Darwinian theory as dictating a reductionistic view of human beings as governed by their "selfish genes." I think Fukuyama ultimately has the better argument, however, because he sees that Darwinian biology rightly understood confirms our commonsense view of human beings as naturally social animals whose social life depends on a natural moral sense, which thus supports the conservative view of human nature.

But before I can defend the goodness of Darwinism as sustaining a conservative view of human nature and moral order, I must defend its truth. Some conservatives have been persuaded by Phillip E. Johnson, Michael J. Behe, William A. Dembski, and other proponents of "intelligent design theory" that Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection has little support in evidence and logic, and that Darwinians stubbornly refuse to recognize the evidence of "intelligent design" in the living world as pointing to a divine Creator.

I agree that conservatives should take seriously the good criticisms of Darwinian biology offered by people like Johnson, Behe, and Dembski. I do not assert that Darwinian theory can be demonstrated with the precision and certainty that would leave no room for reasonable doubt. I only assert that Darwinian theory is supported by the preponderance of the evidence and arguments. In fact, that is all Darwin himself ever claimed for his position. Moreover, although I do not think we can reason by logical inference from ordinary experience to the existence of a Creator, a Darwinian view of the living world as governed by natural laws is at least compatible with a theistic faith in the Creator as the supernatural source of those natural laws.

Darwin acknowledged that there were many serious objections to his theory of descent with modification through natural selection. In *The Origin of Species,* he devoted more than one-third of his argument to considering the "difficulties" for his theory. He admitted that some of the objections "are so serious that to this day I can hardly reflect on them without being in some degree staggered." And yet he answered those objections and insisted that his theory would emerge as highly "probable" if one considered the "facts and arguments" in its favor.

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Darwin recognized that evolutionary biology has all the difficulties that come from being a historical science concerned with unique events in the past that cannot be directly observed or experimentally replicated in the present. The record of the past—such as the geological record of fossils—is incomplete, and therefore Darwin's theory of evolutionary history cannot be proven conclusively. Phillip Johnson exploits this limitation—one inherent in any historical science—by demanding complete historical and experimental evidence for Darwin's theory. He can then conclude that the theory is unsupported by the evidence whenever the evidence is incomplete, as it always will be. But this rhetorical strategy is unreasonable in denigrating the impressive evidence for Darwin's theory, evidence that has been well surveyed by Kenneth Miller in his recent book, *Finding Darwin's God*, which defends Darwinism against Johnson, Behe, and other critics.

Indeed, in *Darwin's Black Box*, Michael Behe concedes that there is enough evidence to support the Darwinian conclusion that all species, including human beings, arose from a common ancestor by descent with modification by natural selection. But he maintains that one kind of biological system cannot be explained by Darwin's theory—namely, any system that is "irreducibly complex."

An "irreducibly complex" system, Behe explains, is "a single system composed of several well-matched, interacting parts that contribute to the basic function, wherein the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning." Such a complex system cannot be produced by natural selection working gradually to improve simpler systems, because "an irreducibly complex system cannot be produced directly (that is, by continuously improving the initial function, which continues to work by the same mechanism) by slight, successive modifications of a precursor system, because any precursor to an irreducibly complex system that is missing a part is by definition nonfunctional."

Behe's favorite analogy is a mousetrap, which is an irreducibly complex system because it could not perform its function of catching mice if any one of its interlocking parts were absent. From observing the mousetrap, we can infer a human designer as its creator. Similarly, Behe argues, from observing the irreducible complexity of biomolecular systems, we can infer that they were created by a divine designer rather than by natural selection working on random variation in evolutionary history. (William Dembski has extended this reasoning in using mathematical probability theory to lay out the formal criteria for detecting "design" when we see "patterned improbability" or "specified complexity.")

As the primary evidence for his position, Behe describes six kinds of biomolecular mechanisms—bacteria moved by a flagellum, cells moved by cilia, blood clotting, cellular transport systems, the immune system, and the biosynthesis of proteins and nucleic acids. In each case, he shows first the great complexity of these systems, and then claims that no scientist has succeeded in explaining clearly and precisely how these complex biochemical systems emerged gradually by Darwinian evolution. Scientists should conclude from this, Behe insists, that the only way to explain such biological complexity is to recognize it as an effect of "intelligent design" by a Creator.

The biologists who reviewed Behe's book had to admit that he was right in claiming that evolutionary biologists have not explained the exact evolutionary pathways for the six biomolecular mechanisms he considers. But as the reviewers indicated, this does not show that such evolutionary pathways do not exist; it only shows our ignorance. Developing such an explanation in the future remains a realistic possibility, claim the scientists, and so Behe's argument from ignorance is weaker than he allows.

Behe often accepts the Darwinian explanations for the origin of anatomical structures. And even at the level of molecular biology, he sometimes accepts Darwinian theory as adequate. For example, he agrees with the Darwinian explanation for the origin of hemoglobin—the protein that carries oxygen in the blood—as having evolved through a natural modification of the simpler protein myoglobin. Here, he admits, "the case for design is weak." Yet as long as there are other biological phenomena that are not explained so clearly by natural evolutionary causes, Behe thinks he can infer "intelligent design."

It appears, then, that Behe's argument is constructed so that it could never be falsified. Even as he concedes that Darwinian scientists can explain the evolutionary origin of many biochemical mechanisms, Behe can always say that whatever remains unexplained is the evidence for "intelligent design." But since science will never succeed in explaining everything, he can never be refuted.

Moreover, Behe, Dembski, and the other proponents of "intelligent design theory" employ a fundamentally fallacious line of reasoning in their equivocal use of the term "intelligent design." Dembski claims that "intelligent design . . . is entirely separable from creationism." He explains: "Intelligent design is detectable; we do in fact detect it; we have reliable methods for detecting it; and its detection involves no recourse to the supernatural. Design is common, rational, and objectifiable."

If this is what he means by "intelligent design," then any rational person should accept it, and it would not

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be very controversial. In fact, most of what Dembski says in his book *The Design Inference* about how we infer design from "specified complexity" is an uncontroversial account of how we detect design by *humanly* intelligent agents. Up to this point, there is indeed "no recourse to the supernatural." But clearly Dembski wants more than that. He writes: "The world is a mirror representing the divine life. The mechanical philosophy was ever blind to this fact. Intelligent design, on the other hand, readily embraces the sacramental nature of physical reality. Indeed, intelligent design is just the Logos theology of John's Gospel restated in the idiom of information theory." This leads Dembski to conclude that "Christ is indispensable to any scientific theory." Here the "recourse to the supernatural" is clear.

This confusion in "intelligent design theory"—both affirming and denying "recourse to the supernatural"—arises from equivocation in the use of the term "intelligent design." Both Dembski and Behe speak of "intelligent design" without clearly distinguishing "*humanly* intelligent design" from "*divinely* intelligent design." We have all observed how the human mind can cause effects that are humanly designed, and from such observable effects, we can infer the existence of humanly intelligent designers. But insofar as we have never directly observed a divine intelligence (that is, an omniscient and omnipotent intelligence) causing effects that are divinely designed, we cannot infer a divinely intelligent designer from our common human experience.

Behe is right that from an apparently well-designed mousetrap we can plausibly infer the existence of a humanly intelligent designer as its cause, because we have common experience of how mousetraps and other artifacts are designed by human minds. (As Dembski indicates, common experience also allows us to identify some animals as intelligent designers.) But from an apparently well-designed organic process or entity we cannot plausibly infer the existence of a divinely intelligent designer as its cause, because we have no common experience of how a divine intelligence designs things for divine purposes.

If something appears to be intelligently designed, and we cannot plausibly explain it either as designed by human intelligence or as a product of Darwinian causes, then we are just ignorant of the causes. The writing of people like Dembski and Behe is instructive in pointing to such cases of ignorance. To assume, in such a case, that the cause is *not* divine requires faith in materialism. To assume that the cause *must* be divine requires faith in theism. Both positions—materialism and theism—ultimately rest on faith, because they go beyond common human experience. Through their equivocal use of the term "intelligent design," the proponents of intelligent design theory hide their inescapable appeal to faith. (Of course, the scientific materialists often try to hide their own appeal to faith.) Contrary to what the intelligent design theorists claim, we cannot move by ordinary experience and logic alone to any inference about a divinely intelligent designer conforming to "the Logos theology of John's Gospel." For that we need faith.

Darwinism is no threat to such theistic faith. Darwinian science must ultimately appeal to the laws of nature as the final ground of explanation; but to ask why nature has the laws that it does is to move beyond nature to nature's God. Atheistic Darwinians like Richard Dawkins cannot deny the theistic faith in God as the First Cause without assuming a materialistic faith that goes beyond the evidence and logic of empirical science. Darwin himself openly confessed that questions about first causes—the origin of life itself or the origin of the universe as a whole—pointed to mysteries that might be forever beyond his science. Thus, Darwinism is compatible with belief in the biblical God.

But is Darwinism compatible with faith in God as the giver of the moral law? That question points to the deeper issue at stake here, because most of the opposition to Darwinian theory among conservatives is motivated not by a purely intellectual concern for the truth or falsity of the theory, but by a deep fear that Darwinism denies the foundations of traditional morality by denying any appeal to the transcendent norms of God's moral law. John G. West, Jr. is the Associate Director of the Discovery Institute's Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture, which has sponsored many of the critics of Darwinism. He explains the conservative motivation for this position when he warns that Darwinism promotes a "scientific materialism" that subverts all traditional morality. "If human beings (and their beliefs) really are the mindless products of their material existence, then everything that gives meaning to human life—religion, morality, beauty—is revealed to be without objective basis."

Similarly, Ferguson, in his attack on Fukuyama, warns conservatives to be suspicious of modern natural science. Insisting on a stark opposition between the scientific study of natural causes and the human experience of moral freedom, he argues that human beings as "autonomous selves" are free from the determinism of nature that is presupposed by Darwinian science. As an alternative to the "materialistic myth of the new science," Ferguson suggests that conservatives should appeal to "the older myths" of free will and natural law as the intellectual foundation for their moral and political thought.

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But Ferguson's separation between biological nature and human freedom is a false dichotomy. A biological explanation of human nature does not deny human freedom if we define that freedom as the capacity for deliberation and choice based on one's own desires. Darwinian science shows, for example, that there are natural differences on average in the behavioral propensities of men and women, and surely conservatives are right to argue that it is foolish for public policies to ignore those natural differences between the sexes. Unlike those on the left, conservatives should recognize—contrary to Ferguson—that human beings are not "autonomous selves" if that means being utterly liberated from their natural sexual identity.

Furthermore, Ferguson's exhortation to conservatives to rely on "old myths" as an alternative to natural science is very bad advice indeed, because this would confirm the complaint of those on the left that conservatism requires an irrational commitment to traditional myths with no grounding in reason or nature. Like Fukuyama, James Q. Wilson, and other Darwinian conservatives, I would argue that conservatives should see that Darwinian views of human nature provide scientific support for the traditional idea of natural moral law. Human beings really are naturally social and moral animals, and therefore we can judge social life by how well it conforms to the natural needs and desires of the human animal. Natural law is not a "myth." It is a rationally observable and scientifically verifiable fact.

Earlier this year, in a special issue of *National Review* devoted to "The New Century," Charles Murray predicted: "The story of human nature as revealed by genetics and neuroscience will be Aristotelian in its philosophical shape and conservative in its political one." I agree, because I see modern biological studies of human nature and morality as a continuation of an intellectual tradition begun by Aristotle that favors a conservative view of social order as rooted in natural human propensities.

Aristotle was a biologist, and he concluded from his biological studies of animal behavior that all social cooperation arises ultimately as an extension of the natural impulses to sexual coupling and parental care of the young. Thomas Aquinas continued Aristotle's biological reasoning about ethics in defending his idea of "natural law" or "natural right." "Natural right," Aquinas declared, "is that which nature has taught all animals." Sexual mating and parental care belong to natural law because they are natural inclinations that human beings share with some other animals. And although the rationality of human beings sets them apart from other animals, human reason apprehends natural inclinations such as mating and parenting as good. Marriage as constituted by customary or legal rules is uniquely human, Aquinas indicates, because such rules require a cognitive capacity for conceptual reasoning that no other animals have. But even so, such rules provide formal structure to desires that are ultimately rooted in the animal nature of human beings.

Although the idea of natural law is most commonly associated with Catholic moral philosophy, the same idea can be found in Protestant Christianity and Judaism. Both John Calvin and Martin Luther spoke of the natural law as the moral law written into the hearts of human beings. In Judaism, a similar teaching arises in the ancient rabbinical tradition of natural law as the "Noahide laws" that God gave to Noah and his descendants, a moral law binding on all humanity by virtue of a universal human nature. David Novak has elaborated the arguments for this Jewish understanding in his recent book, *Natural Law in Judaism.*

Adam Smith continued in this same tradition of ethical naturalism in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments.* Smith showed how ethics could be rooted in the moral sentiments of human nature and the natural inclination to sympathy. Although we can have no direct experience of the feelings of others, Smith believed, we can by sympathy imagine what we would feel in similar circumstances. We take pleasure not only in sharing the feelings of others, but also in knowing that they share our feelings. As formed by nature for social life, human beings are born with a strong desire to please and a strong aversion to offending their fellow human beings. Smith inferred from this that we are inclined to act in such a way as would be praised by others. We judge the conduct of others as proper if it harmonizes with what we would feel and do in their circumstances, and likewise we judge our conduct as proper if it is such as would be approved of by others.

Darwin in *The Descent of Man* adopted this Smithian teaching about sympathy and the natural moral sentiments in developing his biological theory of the moral sense as rooted in human nature. A few years ago, James Q. Wilson's book *The Moral Sense* showed how this Aristotelian-Smithian-Darwinian tradition of moral reasoning has been confirmed by modern social scientific research. By bringing together the philosophic tradition of ethical naturalism from Aristotle to Smith and the scientific tradition of Darwinian reasoning about human nature, conservatives could base their moral and political thought on what I have called "Darwinian natural right."

Conservatives influenced by Leo Strauss might object to this idea by citing Strauss' claim that Aristotelian natural right depends on a teleological view

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of the universe that is denied by modern science. But I would argue that Aristotle's teleology is primarily biological, and so the question is whether teleology is necessary for *living* nature. Aristotle's biological teleology is not a *cosmic* teleology but an *immanent* teleology, and this immanent teleology is confirmed by Darwinism. Darwin's principle of natural selection explains the adaptation of species without reference to any forces guiding nature to secure a cosmic scale of perfection. Yet, although the evolutionary process does not serve goals, the organisms emerging from that process do.

Darwin's biology does not deny—rather it reaffirms—the immanent teleology displayed in the striving of each living being to fulfill its species-specific ends. Reproduction, growth, feeding, healing, courtship, parental care of the young—these and many other activities of animals are goal-directed. Biologists cannot explain such processes unless they ask about their ends or purposes, and thus they must still look for "final causes." In arguing for the immanent teleology of biological phenomena, I agree with Leon Kass that a crucial part of a "more natural science" would be a Darwinian understanding of teleology as rooted in "the internal and immanent purposiveness of individual organisms." Explaining natural right as rooted in human biological nature would move towards what Strauss identified as "comprehensive science," a science of nature that would include the ethical striving of human nature as part of the natural world.

Adopting a Darwinian view of human nature and ethics would have both theoretical and practical benefits for conservatism. The theoretical benefit in a Darwinian conservatism is that an Aristotelian conception of natural right rooted in a Darwinian understanding of human nature would provide a solid intellectual basis for conservative political thought. Oddly enough, this point becomes clear if one reads Peter Singer's new book, *A Darwinian Left*. Singer recognizes that the traditional left has rejected the idea of a fixed human nature and affirmed the malleability and perfectibility of humankind, because the left has wanted to radically transform human life by changing the social and economic conditions that supposedly determine human history. Like Ferguson, the traditional left has assumed that human history transcends natural history. The collapse of Marxist and other socialist regimes in the twentieth century seemed to confirm, however, the prediction of Ludwig von Mises in 1922 that socialism would fail because it was contrary to human nature. Singer's response is to try to persuade his fellow leftists to adopt a Darwinian view of human nature. "A Darwinian left," he explains, would accept "that there is such a thing as human nature, and seek to find out more about it, so that policies can be grounded on the best available evidence of what human beings are like." But the strain in his argument is clear when he confesses, "In some ways, this is a sharply deflated vision of the left, its utopian ideas replaced by a coolly realistic view of what can be achieved. That is, I think, the best we can do today." In fact, most of what he suggests as part of his "sharply deflated vision of the left" would be acceptable to conservatives, who have long assumed that conformity to human nature is a fundamental goal of good social policy. Without realizing what he has done, Singer implicitly shows how a Darwinian understanding of human nature supports a conservative view of social order.

Conservatives such as Ferguson, who reject a theoretical foundation in human nature, must ultimately appeal to "myth" as their final ground of judgment, which follows the lead of such conservative thinkers as Richard Weaver who spoke of the "metaphysical dream" of transcendent order as a poetic creation necessary for any culture. The danger here is that conservatism begins to look like a Burkean Nietzscheanism, in which the moral order of society requires mythic traditions as noble lies that hide the ugly truth of nihilism.

Religious conservatives might rely on God's moral law as the transcendent ground of their conservatism; but if they see no natural law rooted in human nature, they have no common ground of moral discourse with those who do not share their particular religious faith. David Novak has said that "natural law is that which makes Jewish moral discourse possible in an intercultural world." The same could be said about the moral discourse of Catholics and Protestants.

The practical benefit in a Darwinian conservatism is that it would sustain conservative reasoning about public policy. Although Darwinism cannot prescribe specific policies, it can remind us of the propensities of human nature to which any successful policy must conform. Consider, for example, the issues of policy associated with crime, family life, and military service. Violent crime is committed mostly by young unmarried men, and thus preventing or controlling such crime depends on understanding the biological nature of young men and the universal need in every society to channel their male propensities into socially acceptable behavior. The stability of family life is fundamental for every society because the dependence of the young on parental care is a natural characteristic of the human animal, and thus every good society must regulate sexual mating, conjugal bonding, and parental attachment to children to secure the natural

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ends of family life. Training for military combat is predominantly a young male activity, and the natural differences in the temperament of men and women will always impede any attempt to eliminate sexual differences in military service. Although cultural and historical circumstances create great variability in the behavioral patterns of crime, family life, and military service, conservative policies should recognize the natural inclinations of human biology that constrain policy choices in these areas of life.

As Aristotle and Darwin recognized, deciding such practical issues requires the prudence that can determine what would be best for particular situations in particular societies. The biology of human nature is not about natural necessities that hold in all cases, but about natural propensities that hold in most cases. A Darwinian conservatism would therefore respect the variability in human affairs. And yet the universality of human biological nature would allow us to judge divergent policies of action by how well they nurture the natural desires and capacities of human beings as social animals.

We can anticipate that the future will bring wondrous advances in the scientific study of human nature. These advances will come from many fields of biology, such as genetics, neurobiology, animal behavior, developmental biology, and evolutionary theory. If conservatism is to remain intellectually vital, conservatives will need to show that their position is compatible with this new science of human nature.

That's why conservatives need Charles Darwin.

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Michael J. Behe

I'm sorry to be blunt, but the notion that Darwinism supports conservatism is absurd. Steven Pinker notoriously gleaned support for infanticide from the *Origin of Species*. Other Darwinists have argued that rape and inner-city teenage pregnancy are evolutionary adaptations. None of these is a conservative goal. If Professor Arnhart's ideas were correct we would expect that university biology departments would be hotbeds of conservatism. Take it from me, they aren't. Perhaps Prof. Arnhart should explain to John Maynard Smith, the prominent evolutionary theoretician and Marxist, how natural selection supports conservative principles. Or Steven Jay Gould. Or—to show the historical roots of conservative Darwinism—J. B. S. Haldane, who was a big fan of Stalin.

Darwinism—even if true—has no resources to support any real philosophy, whether conservative or liberal, vegetarian or royalist. Organisms have traits, the traits vary, some variations help the organism leave more offspring than other organisms—that's the whole Darwinian ball of wax. Nothing in Darwinism tells you what those traits should be, either now or in the future, or even what a "trait" is. Nothing says whether it is the average of the traits that is important, the novelties, or the most extreme variation. "Important" has no meaning in Darwinism other than to leave more offspring, which can be done by means pleasant or brutal. A person can use Darwinism to justify any preference; he simply points to some person or animal with the trait he likes and argues that it's natural. And everyone else can do the same. Postmodernists are not known to be hostile to natural selection.

Like most Darwinian enthusiasts, Prof. Arnhart does not distinguish between what the theory actually explains, which is very little, and what it merely rationalizes post hoc, which is practically everything. Consider, as an example, that Darwinism predicts ultimately selfish behavior as organisms strive to continue their own genetic line. By looking around them, however, Darwinists belatedly noticed that humans happily cooperate and, in cases such as celibate clergy, even sacrifice their own "genetic good" for others. Something was amiss. So computer models were generated to try to squeeze human behavior into a Darwinian framework. Lots of computer models. Some models didn't work at all; others gave the Darwinists something close to what they were looking for. But the entire procedure was an exercise in rationalization. Darwinists didn't tell us what human nature is or should be—they looked to see what humans were doing and then tried to fit it into their theory. Nor did they tell us how humans came to have such unique and complex abilities as speech and abstract thought. Rather, they started with the fact that we have them.

Darwinists effectively exploit popular confusion over the word *evolution*. Sometimes the word indicates simply descent with modification, leaving open the question of how the staggering changes in life forms could possibly have occurred. Other times Darwin's particular mechanism of natural selection is added to the meaning. It is critical for people interested in the subject to understand, when they hear it said that evolution is supported by overwhelming evidence, that virtually all of the evidence concerns just common descent. The experimental evidence that natural selection could build a vertebrate from an invertebrate, a mammal from a reptile, or a human from an ape is a bit less than the

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experimental evidence for superstring theory—that is, none at all.

Prof. Arnhart has numerous misconceptions about my position. Most importantly, while I do agree that common descent is supported by the bulk of the evidence (although admittedly there are difficulties at higher phylogenetic levels), I certainly do not think we have any reason to suppose the process occurred by random mutation and natural selection, the position Prof. Arnhart attributes to me. Rather, before we make hasty, uninformed guesses about things as enormously complicated as whole organs and animals, we must first look at life's foundation—molecules and cells—to see what natural selection can explain there. As I've written, Darwinism quickly runs into nasty problems even at the ground level of life—the one we can examine in greatest detail. To say the least, that makes me skeptical that natural selection can explain significant developments at higher levels of biology. It is much more plausible that the purposeful design everyone sees in life is real, rather than just apparent.

Prof. Arnhart worries that conservatives rely on "old myths" and wants them instead to depend on the eternal verities of Darwinism. Those verities, however, have had very bad times of late. Icons of evolution such as Haeckel's embryos, peppered moths, and classic origin-of-life experiments have been shown to be more mythic than scientific, even though they still live as textbook orthodoxy. One prominent evolutionary biologist recently wrote, "In science's pecking order, evolutionary biology lurks somewhere near the bottom, far closer to phrenology than to physics." Conservatives who want to add the luster of science to their philosophy would do much better hooking up with astronomy or computer science.

The relationship between Darwinism and real science is parasitic. The theory's main use is for Darwinists to claim credit for whatever biology discovers. If research shows that humans are selfish, Darwinism can explain that. If science shows we are unselfish, why, it can explain that, too. If we are a combination of both—no problem. If cells are simple or complex, if sexual reproduction is common or rare, if embryos are similar or different, Darwinism will explain it all for you. The elasticity of the theory would make Sigmund Freud blush.

Darwinism is now seeking to become parasitic on politics, too, by offering shallow, ad hoc justifications for what we already know about human nature. Yet conservatives developed their political philosophy over the course of centuries with no help from Darwinists, and with no reference to shifting Darwinian stories. I recommend that conservatives decline the kind offer of Darwinists to take credit for their ideas.

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William A. Dembski

According to Larry Arnhart, "Most of the opposition to Darwinian theory among conservatives is motivated not by a purely intellectual concern for the truth or falsity of the theory, but by a deep fear that Darwinism denies the foundations of traditional morality by denying any appeal to the transcendent norms of God's moral law." I want here to challenge this statement, especially with regard to my own opposition to Darwin's theory.

For critics like Professor Arnhart, it is inconceivable that someone once properly exposed to Darwin's theory could doubt it. To oppose Darwin's theory requires some hidden motivation, like wanting to shore up traditional morality or being a closet fundamentalist.

For the record, therefore, let me reassert that my opposition to Darwinism rests strictly on scientific grounds. Yes, I am interested in and frequently write about the theological and cultural implications of Darwinism's imminent demise and replacement by intelligent design. But the only reason I take seriously such implications is because I am convinced that Darwinism is on its own terms an oversold and overextended scientific theory.

Even so, Prof. Arnhart is convinced I must be deluding myself. Here is his reasoning: Dembski's principal claim to fame is for developing a method to detect design (cf. my book *The Design Inference*, Cambridge University Press, 1998). According to Prof. Arnhart, this method works just fine for detecting human design. Nonetheless, he claims, it breaks down for detecting nonhuman design. What's more, since the only designing intelligence that could have played a role in the origin and history of life (including human life) must have been nonhuman, my theory of design detection is irrelevant and misleading for biology. As Prof. Arnhart puts it, "If something appears to be intelligently designed, and we cannot plausibly explain it either as designed by human intelligence or as a product of Darwinian causes, then we are just ignorant of the causes."

This statement doesn't quite express Prof. Arnhart's intention. Name your favorite nonhuman but embodied intelligence, and a counterexample to Prof. Arnhart's statement readily comes to mind. Consider beaver dams. They are not the product of human intelligence nor are they the product of Darwinian causes,

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but we are not ignorant of their causes. Beaver intelligence is responsible for beaver dams. (Note that invoking the Darwinian mechanism to explain why beavers build dams is not illuminating because if beavers didn't build dams, the Darwinian mechanism would readily account for this as well.) Or consider extraterrestrial intelligences sending meaningful messages to earth (e.g., a long sequence of prime numbers as in the movie *Contact*). Such messages would bear the clear marks of design, but would not be designed by a human intelligence or be the product of Darwinian causes.

So my theory works well for nonhuman design as well. But what if Prof. Arnhart admits that beavers and even extraterrestrials can be detectable designers, but that my method cannot detect an immaterial designer—that if no material or embodied agent can be found for some effect, we have to plead ignorance?

In the present article Prof. Arnhart offers no argument for why an immaterial designer should be empirically inaccessible, leaving us to feel that there must be something fundamentally different between embodied and immaterial design. Prof. Arnhart has elaborated on this point at a conference we both attended, so I might as well take the opportunity here to quickly rebut this argument.

The claim I make is this: design is always inferred, it is never a direct intuition. We don't get into the mind of designers and thereby attribute design. Rather we look at effects in the physical world that seem to have been designed and from those features infer to a designing intelligence. The philosopher Thomas Reid made this same argument over two hundred years ago. The virtue of my work is to formalize and make precise those features that reliably signal design, casting them in the idiom of modern information theory.

Prof. Arnhart's counterclaim is this: people don't infer design as I suggest, but rather reflect on their own intelligence and attribute design when they recognize something it takes intelligence to do. Such introspection, though, is not an empirical basis for inferring an immaterial designer. Though at first blush plausible, this argument collapses quickly when probed. Piaget, for instance, would have rejected it on developmental grounds: babies do not make sense of intelligence by introspecting their own intelligence but by coming to terms with the effects of intelligence in their external environment. For example, they see the ball in front of them and then taken away, and learn that Daddy is moving the ball—in effect reasoning from effect to intelligence. Introspection (always a questionable psychological category) plays at best a secondary role in how initially we make sense of intelligence.

Even later in life, however, when we've attained full self-consciousness and introspection can be performed with varying degrees of reliability, I would argue that intelligence is still inferred. Indeed, introspection must always remain inadequate for assessing intelligence. (By intelligence I mean the power and facility to choose between options—this coincides with the Latin etymology of "intelligence," namely, "to choose between.") For instance, I cannot by introspection assess my intelligence at proving theorems in differential geometry. It's been over a decade since I've proven any theorems in differential geometry. I need to get out paper and pencil and actually try to prove some theorems in that field. How I do—and not my memory of how well I did in the past—will determine whether and to what degree intelligence can be attributed to my theorem-proving.

I therefore continue to maintain that intelligence is always inferred, that we infer it through well-established methods, and that there is no principled way to distinguish human and divine design so that human design remains empirically accessible but divine design is rendered empirically inaccessible. This is the rub. Convinced Darwinists like Prof. Arnhart need to block the design inference whenever it threatens to implicate God. Once this line of defense is breached, Darwinism is dead.

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Larry Arnhart replies:

I have argued that Darwinian biology supports the conservative appeal to natural moral law as rooted in human biological nature. Michael J. Behe dismisses this as absurd, because he thinks Darwinism is so flexible in its philosophic implications that it could support Marxism as easily as conservatism. I disagree.

As I indicated in my essay, Darwinism denies the fundamental assumption of Marxism—the radical malleability of human nature as a contingent product of social and economic conditions. Only if human nature were radically malleable could a socialist revolution transform human beings to conform to a socialist utopia. Although Marx and Engels accepted Darwinism in explaining the animal world, including human physiology and anatomy, they thought that human history manifested the uniquely human freedom to transcend nature. Lenin expressed this thought when he said that "the transfer of biological

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concepts into the field of the social sciences is a meaningless phrase." Contemporary Marxist biologists such as Richard Lewontin and Stephen Jay Gould continue this tradition when they insist on the freedom of human history from the constraints of biological nature.

By contrast, conservatives see the failure of Marxian socialism as confirming the warnings of Ludwig von Mises in 1922 in his book *Socialism.* By attempting to abolish private property through socialist economics, and attempting to abolish marriage and the family through "free love," the socialist communities, Mises predicted, would eventually collapse, because "we have no reason to assume that human nature will be any different under socialism from what it is now." Mises rejected "Social Darwinism" as "pseudo-Darwinism," because it ignored the importance of "mutual aid" in the animal world. And he suggested that Darwinian biology rightly understood would sustain his conclusion that social cooperation through a division of labor was rooted in the biological propensities of human nature.

Recently, Richard Pipes, in his book *Property and Freedom,* has argued that acquiring property is a natural instinct for human beings, and therefore societies that try to restrict or abolish property—such as Tsarist or Marxist Russia—tend to deny freedom and promote tyranny because they must repress human nature. To support his claim that property is natural, Pipes appeals to biological studies of possessiveness and territoriality among human beings and other animals. Here then is one of many possible illustrations of how a Darwinian understanding of human nature confirms conservative social thought.

Of course, this assumes the truth of Darwinism. But Professor Behe and William A. Dembski argue that "intelligent design theory" gives us a better scientific account of living nature than does Darwinian biology. As indicated by the recent debates (in Kansas and elsewhere) over the public school teaching of evolution, they are persuading many conservatives to join them in their attack on evolution.

To infer that the laws of nature point to God as the First Cause of those laws is a reasonable position. Such thinking is implied in the traditional appeal in American political thought to "the laws of nature and of nature's God." It is also compatible with Darwinism. Indeed, theistic evolutionists (from Asa Gray to Howard Van Till) see no necessary conflict between theistic religion and Darwinian science. But Profs. Behe and Dembski are not satisfied with this.

Do they believe that the "intelligent designer" must miraculously intervene to separately create every species of life and every "irreducibly complex" mechanism in the living world? If so, exactly when and how does that happen? By what observable causal mechanisms does the "intelligent designer" execute these miraculous acts? How would one formulate falsifiable tests for such a theory? Proponents of "intelligent design theory" refuse to answer such questions, because it is rhetorically advantageous for them to take a purely negative position in which they criticize Darwinian theory without defending a positive theory of their own. That is why they are not taken seriously in the scientific community. And that is why it would be a big mistake for conservatives to think that "intelligent design theory" offers a serious scientific alternative to Darwinism. FT

Shakespearean Variation 44

If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,
And Descartes with his methodic way
Were right, who flesh and blood had brought
To mere res cogitans, I'd rather go than stay.
For how could mind in space be made to stand,
Or loving me get in warm touch with thee?
Methodic doubt despoils both sea and land,
Erases human hearts nor lets us bodily be.
The thought that you and I are chiefly thought,
And minds by thinking could make body gone,
Redefines the world that God has wrought,
Depriving lovers of their cause to moan.
Disembodied mind with reason slow,
Destroys the bodies mothers bore with woe.

Ralph McInerny

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Review Essay

Legal Theories Nobody Believes

Steven D. Smith

The Warren Court and American Politics. By Lucas A. Powe, Jr. *Harvard University Press. 566 pp. $35.*

Brennan and Democracy. By Frank I. Michelman. *Princeton University Press. 148 pp. $24.95.*

The Rehnquist Court and the Constitution. By Tinsley E. Yarbrough. *Oxford University Press. 306 pp. $35.*

In the Preface to his absorbing history of the Warren Court, Professor Lucas A. Powe, Jr. casually slips in what ought to be a startling confession. The confession begins innocently enough. "I freely admit," Powe discloses, "that I was once a partisan, celebrating liberal victories and despairing retrenchment." This of course is what one would expect from a typical law professor, especially one who served as a law clerk to Justice William O. Douglas; a similar stance is evident in the bulk of modern constitutional scholarship, including the books by Frank I. Michelman and Tinsley E. Yarbrough that I will be discussing. But Powe proceeds to explain that "years in academia . . . have given me a different perspective." No, he hasn't joined the Federalist Society. Instead, and more intriguingly, Powe reports that today he *does not care* whether the Warren Court decisions (with the sole, and unexplained, exception of *Brown v. Board of Education*) were correct or not. "It no longer matters to me whether the *Reapportionment Cases* (1964) or *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966) was rightly decided."

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This admission is an odd prelude to a five-hundred-page exposition of a subject that ostensibly "no longer matters" to the author except as material for historical explanation. After reading his book, though, I suspect that Powe misdescribes himself. His discussion of the Warren Court and its legacy exudes not indifference so much as a sort of paralysis in his capacity for genuine belief. Moreover, although Powe himself does not make the point, he provides ample evidence for the conclusion that this paralysis is itself a natural product of the modern Supreme Court—a conclusion that the books by Michelman and Yarbrough inadvertently confirm. Though varying in aim and scope, these books thus converge in revealing a rarely remarked but deeply troublesome aspect of the modern Court's performance—its debilitating consequences for the possibility of actually *believing* in constitutional law.

This claim needs elaboration, so let us start with the shortest but most theoretically ambitious of these books—Frank Michelman's *Brennan and Democracy*. Michelman, a former Brennan clerk who as a Harvard law professor has been one of the most formidable legal theorists of the last three decades, is a devoted defender of what is sometimes called "the Brennan Court." Though never Chief Justice, William J. Brennan was often considered the intellectual moving force for much of the thirty-four years (1956-1990) he sat on the Court, especially under Earl Warren (1953-69) and Warren Burger (1969-86). But does Michelman actually *believe* in the correctness—or, as theorists often put it, the "legitimacy"—of that Court's performance? It may seem so, but a close reading of his apologetical essay leaves the matter in doubt.

Michelman's book reflects a mixture of purposes. It is in part a sort of eulogy, commemorating Brennan's "kindliness, his humor, his verve, his graciousness, his

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immense and touching open-heartedness . . . his friendship: a blessing and a joy to all upon whom it fell." The book also contains a substantial section devoted to defending the Justice against critics who have challenged his liberal credentials by pointing to opinions that employ what look like non-liberal arguments grounded in tradition or communitarianism. Michelman's defense insists that the suspect arguments were made, in his delicate phrase, "under constraint of rhetorical fashion," and did not reflect Brennan's more genuine commitments. He said it, but he didn't really mean it.

These efforts, though, seem incidental to the book's larger purpose, which is to enlist Brennan in resisting the charge that modern judicial review is undemocratic. The problem is all too familiar to readers of this journal: beyond clear violations of constitutionally protected liberties, judicial invalidation of laws enacted by elected legislators (or, in the case of ballot initiatives, by the citizens themselves) appears to transgress the premises of democracy. Why, in a nation committed to "government of the people, by the people, for the people," should five robed appointees—or, often, just one—be permitted to overrule the decisions of the people or their chosen representatives? Answering this question—or, failing that, obfuscating it—has been *the* main project for legions of constitutional theorists over the last four or five decades.

Perhaps the most common responses have argued, based on a famous footnote in *Carolene Products v. U.S.* (1938), that democracy itself demands aggressive judicial protection for "discrete and insular minorities" because they are not adequately represented in the political process; or else theorists have elaborated sophisticated (or perhaps sophistical) hermeneutical theories that permit modern judges or scholars to announce conclusions that would have startled the enactors of the Constitution while purporting to be merely "interpreting" the document. But these positions have been cogently criticized, so Michelman takes a different (though hardly untrodden) path.

His basic argument goes something like this. The value of "self-determination" is central to modern political morality, and this means that the law must not simply coerce citizens but instead must elicit their respectful obedience. But respect cannot depend on the citizens' *agreement* either with the substantive content of the law or even with the rightness of basic law-making procedures: in a pluralistic society citizens will inevitably diverge over those matters. Still, in order to be legitimate, law must have *some* "respect-garnering" feature. So what might that feature be?

Michelman's answer revolves around two claims. First, the operative practice of democracy, the rightness of basic "laws of lawmaking," and in a sense the theory of democracy itself present *philosophical* questions that cannot be decided by majority vote. If three-fourths of the citizens say that "democracy means the dictatorship of Napoleon," their vote would not make it so. Second, for all its fallibility, the judiciary might still be comparatively better at answering these philosophical questions than the electorate as a whole is, or than other governmental institutions are. If so, then citizens have a reason to respect decisions made in accordance with basic laws approved by the judiciary—even if both the substantive decisions and the law-making processes *seem* unjust or unsound. If you think a parent or a professor is better at understanding some kinds of questions than you are, then you might respect their answers even when the answers make little sense to you. The same deference might be due the Justices, Michelman suggests, with regard to "the procedure-independent standards of basic legal rightness."

There is much to question in this argument. One may wonder whether or how the argument justifies a host of modern decisions invalidating practices such as graduation prayer or a state motto proclaiming "With God, all things are possible." For now, though, let us focus on a pivotal doubt: *Why* should citizens believe that judges are better than others at answering philosophical questions about the rightness of basic laws, or about the meaning of democracy?

Unlike some theorists, Michelman does not ascribe any distinctive philosophical aptitude to judges; nor does he pretend that the answers are somehow encrypted in the Constitution itself and that judges have some special capacity for cracking the constitutional code. Instead, he hypothesizes—and this is the crux of the argument—that judges might have a comparative advantage because they (by contrast to, say, legislators) are "expos[ed] . . . to the full blast of sundry opinions and interest-articulations in society." In sum, the Justices' authority to strike down democratically enacted laws derives from their more complete exposure to the range of interests and views in society.

Michelman notes at the outset that his argument is aimed at a "nonspecialist audience," but I am afraid that one needs specialized training—or indoctrination—to find this claim credible. Think about it: which sort of official is more likely to be "exposed to the full blast of opinions in society"? A member of, say, the House of Representatives, constantly deluged with mail and phone calls that he will ignore at his peril, obligated to deal on a daily basis with journalists and lobbyists and members of the opposing party, subject to frequent campaigns in which he must speak with people at factories and farms and schools? Or a

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Supreme Court Justice, sealed off in marble chambers from which the press and public are largely excluded, deliberately insulated against electoral responsibility by a system of life tenure, and required to decide only the minute fraction of cases that the Court chooses to hear—cases that will be addressed in a forbidding and highly artificial language used by a specialized class (*Michelman's* class) and largely incomprehensible to ordinary people. Is it remotely plausible to suppose that the Justice is more completely exposed to the "full blast" of opinions in society? Could anyone other than an Ivy League professor believe this?

Indeed, can even the Ivy League professor actually believe the argument? Notice the knowing wink that Michelman gives to readers who may be paying attention:

> I am not saying that any American ought to believe [this account], I am merely asking you to suppose that you did. You might then find that the fact that you did allowed you to abide by the day-to-day political outcomes of those basic arrangements, out of respect for the arrangements.

Nor does Michelman follow up this curious resort to the conditional mood by offering his own positive endorsement to the argument. Instead, in a sentence that could hardly be more noncommittal, he goes on to say, "I think that Justice Brennan may well have believed something along those lines."

Indeed, for some pages before this passage, Michelman employs the heavily conditional and second-person usage. This unusual mode of presentation begins at about the point where he turns from criticizing other theorists' defenses of judicial review and begins to offer a more positive account. At this point we begin to encounter sentences like this: "Here is how it might work. Your starting point would have to be . . ." Or, "Here are four steps that your thought might securely take . . ." Perhaps the second-person usage is merely an attempt to establish a conversational rapport with the "nonspecialist audience." But deliberately or not, these devices serve to avoid authorial commitment. At its central point, in sum, Michelman's essay is full of signals that seem to say, "Here's something that *you*—you nonspecialists—might find persuasive. *Justice Brennan* might even have believed it. As for *me*, well, I might and I might not."

Powe finds himself in a similar predicament, I think, but his response in *The Warren Court and American Politics* chooses candor over subtlety. As I noted, Powe declares at the outset that he will not defend—and indeed does not care about—the *correctness* of the Warren Court's decisions. Despite his protestation of indifference, however, Powe's attitudes toward the Court's members and decisions are apparent. I didn't keep score case by case, but it seems fair to say that Powe has, on the whole, a favorable attitude toward the major decisions that constitute the legacy of the Warren Court, as well as a genuine if discerning admiration for the Justices mainly responsible for those decisions. But Powe leaves these judgments muted because he seems to recognize that as a constitutional scholar, an *approving attitude* is just about all he has to offer in support of those decisions. So he limits his *scholarly* efforts to historical explanation. What did the Court do, and why did it do it?

To be sure, this explanatory purpose does not permit Powe to ignore the cognitive dimension of the Court's decisions. After all, the Justices *said*—as Justices will—that they were deciding cases as they did because the Constitution so required; thus it just might turn out that the constitutional reasoning in fact provides the best explanation for the Court's decisions. Powe accordingly gives due attention to the argumentation; indeed, by contrast to the other authors under review here, he has a knack for succinctly conveying and assessing the Court's arguments. But his overall stance toward the Court's adventures in reasoning is one of detached skepticism. By Powe's reckoning, the arguments offered by the Justices were cogent in some cases—but more often vulnerable and unconvincing, sometimes disingenuous, occasionally absurd and irresponsible.

Because the Court's reasoning was so often transparently uncompelling, that reasoning doesn't *explain* much; it is just too hard to imagine that the Justices could have believed that the Constitution made them do what they did. To acknowledge this, however, is not to judge the decisions themselves deficient. Powe suggests that it is a mistake to evaluate the Warren Court by the coherence or plausibility of its reasoning; that is because the Justices after all "were not constitutional theorists." Rather, they "were men with power happily exercising it to promote the values of what were, at least during the 1960s, the dominant national elites." Thus, Powe is skeptical of the familiar account that depicts a Court acting on a reflective commitment to protect "discrete and insular minorities." Acknowledging that many of the decisions (not all) can be fit into this framework, Powe suspects that this flattering portrayal attributes too much theoretical reflection to the Justices.

But if legal reasoning and constitutional theory are of little help in explaining what the Warren Court did, to what should the historian turn for understanding? Powe's answer treats the Court as an institution thoroughly—and not dishonorably—immersed in politics.

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He situates the Court's decisions and accompanying arguments within an engaging and impressively researched narrative of the various political dimensions of the Warren era: the politics and fortuities of judicial appointments, the extracurricular contacts between Justices and Presidents, the political opposition to the Court and the political and personal oppositions within the Court itself, and the calculations (and frequent miscalculations) that attended the Court's efforts to drag a resistant American culture toward the conception of the good society held in the sixties by "dominant national elites."

Powe's account features selective portraits of the leading Justices. Earl Warren himself, though a "wonderful practical politician" capable of "working magic in small groups," was also "ham-handed with opinions and found theory foreign." Given Warren's ineptitude in the realm of words and ideas, the pivotal opinions were often assigned to Brennan—whose importance derived not from any philosophical depth, as admirers (like Michelman) have sometimes struggled to suppose, but rather from a combination of charm, doggedness, and lawyerly acumen. Brennan "did not need an intellectually coherent theory," Powe explains; "he wanted realistically coherent results." In the effort to achieve such results, Brennan was "willing to say virtually anything (or nothing) if a key member of his majority requested it, so long as the opinion reached the right outcome."

Not surprisingly, the things he was induced to say can prove embarrassing upon close inspection. Thus, Brennan's views on obscenity were "hopelessly confused"; his position on *habeas corpus* was supported by "a full-fledged, but mythical, history"; his opinion in a key search-and-seizure case was "a result looking for a reason"; and his exhilarating but incautious statements about the meaning of equality, taken seriously, "would mean toppling hundreds, perhaps thousands, of laws." For his philosophically flustered but nonetheless tenacious and crafty efforts, Brennan earned the distinction of being "the most important jurist of the second half of the century." Powe bestows the honor with evident warmth.

Like Brennan, Hugo Black could do wonderful things with—or to—history; the product of his fecundity was perhaps the more striking because Black, unlike Brennan, insisted that the Court was confined to enforcing the historical meaning of the Constitution. Powe comments that "Black mangled history to make it conform to what he believed the Framers should have believed, which not surprisingly was what he believed, and he then claimed that only history should count." During the McCarthy period, Black's historical creativity was devoted to a strongly libertarian portrayal of the free speech clause. Later in his career, the picture grew darker; without admitting to any change in his position, Black voted to uphold a variety of restrictions on expression, especially youthful expression—by students and draft resisters. Powe suggests that Black's more repressive turn grew in part out of "the problems his family was having with his teenage grandson." Of course, there were also other influences on Black's judicial behavior. Along with Douglas and Warren, Black regarded anti-Catholicism as "an acceptable and respectable prejudice"; this prejudice surely informed the Court's religion clause jurisprudence.

Powe presents the less celebrated Justices more simply—perhaps, at times, a bit *too* simply. Byron White "had no interest in theory. He believed in 'good outcomes.' . . . What was good was constitutional; what was bad was not." Arthur Goldberg was a committed activist, and though "highly intelligent, his ego dwarfed his brain." Abe Fortas was likewise not lacking in self-esteem; he "not only voted liberal but also did not have the slightest doubt about his own abilities or the efficacy of the Court acting as the engine of reform." Fortas' righteous zeal for reforming society was not matched by a comparable concern for personal rectitude, Powe suggests; his opinions could be disingenuous, and in seeking the chief justiceship Fortas repeatedly and blatantly "lied through his teeth" before a Senate committee.

The supreme self-confidence that Powe ascribes to Fortas and Goldberg was characteristic of the Court as a whole. The Warren Court operated, Powe explains, in "an era when those working in Washington, D.C., believed wisdom rested exclusively within its city limits," and the Justices personified this attitude. Powe remarks on "how ideologically liberal they were and how willing they were to believe their own judgment was infallible." This remarkably confident Court joyously repudiated traditions and precedents at a record-shattering rate and issued a series of revolutionary rulings that significantly transformed the social order. For example, the Court during the 1960s "remade the entire system of criminal justice." Powe notes that

> in the mid-1960s the American Law Institute was engaged in studies of criminal justice, but the Court, fully aware of this, could not wait. A majority of the Justices were men of action, confident in their own judgment. If wide-scale social engineering was necessary—and they certainly believed it was—then who better to do it?

Some of what I have quoted might seem to come from a conservative, anti-Court tract. Prodigiously

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endowed both with self-assurance and with the deficiencies of mind and character common to mankind, the Warren Court poobahs seem almost straight out of a Gilbert and Sullivan libretto. Or at least one can imagine a different author using the same material to paint this picture. What makes Powe's book intriguing is that he draws no such conclusions; he intends neither tragedy nor comedy—nor even normative criticism. As noted, he explains at the outset that his purpose is "neither to cheer nor boo" but only to "explain and understand"; and he seems to be sincere in this.

And indeed, as I have already noted, what the Warren Court did seems largely to Powe's liking. In his final chapter, Powe quotes a lengthy paean from Yale Law School's Owen Fiss lauding the Court for carrying out "a program of constitutional reform almost revolutionary in its aspiration and . . . in its achievements"; and Powe seems in the main to concur. Fiss' panegyric indicates, he comments, that "there were very serious problems in the United States, but thanks to the courageous action of the members of the Court, all the problems"—except gender discrimination, Powe notes, which had to wait for the Burger Court—"were alleviated and some were solved completely." But Powe offers this judgment in passing; he does not insist on it, and in any case seems to understand that it is not the sort of thing that could be either supported or discredited on the basis of constitutional reasoning.

That is the part of the Warren Court legacy, I think—the Court's *reasoning,* its attempts to justify its results on the basis of "the Constitution"—that for Powe "no longer matters." He does not bother either to cheer or to boo, it seems, because he recognizes that cheering or booing is all that he would be doing; so what would be the point? In sum, a consequence of the Warren Court's failed attempts at constitutional reasoning, as Powe's self-conscious silences eloquently reflect, is to subvert confidence in the efficacy of such reasoning—and hence to undermine the possibility of actually being convinced by such reasoning, or of actually believing the conclusions to which it leads.

If Powe forswears cheering and booing, Tinsley Yarbrough revels in them; indeed, they are the sum and substance of his argumentative strategy. *The Rehnquist Court and the Constitution* advances a thesis that is hardly novel. "President Reagan envisioned a Rehnquist Court willing to repudiate the Warren era's human rights legacy," Yarbrough asserts, but because of the sturdy resistance of Clinton appointees (Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer) and the laudable unpredictability of some Republican appointees (Sandra Day O'Connor, Anthony Kennedy, David Souter), "to date, their efforts have achieved only partial success." Many potential readers will be persuaded of this thesis before starting Yarbrough's book; for his part, Yarbrough seems to count on such a priori acceptance, and hence is content to invite readers to join him in applauding or hissing on cue.

Yarbrough's early chapters are accordingly devoted to portraying the "conservative" members of the current Court (William Rehnquist, Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas) as the sort of people who you just know would be opposed to human rights. He does not attempt a sympathetic or even comprehendingly critical description of these Justices' constitutional philosophies; their hostility to human rights, it seems, comes from the fact that they are, well, . . . just bad people. Thus, beginning at page one, Yarbrough's presentation of the Chief Justice mainly rehashes accusations raised in the confirmation process: as a law clerk Rehnquist ostensibly opposed *Brown v. Board of Education* and supported *Plessy v. Ferguson,* later he allegedly harassed minority voters in Phoenix, he signed deeds containing racially restrictive covenants, and he used painkilling medications. On the bench, Rehnquist could be "pompous." And he is insensitive; for example, despite an objection lodged by sixteen law clerks he persisted in a court tradition of holding an annual Christmas party that included offensive features such as "a large Christmas tree, a tape recorder playing Christmas music, . . . and the singing of carols." Grudgingly conceding that Rehnquist "was considered a diplomatic, considerate, generally unflappable colleague," Yarbrough hastens to explain that "some privately attributed his calm manner to the painkilling medications."

The villain signs also wave as the other "conservative" Justices are presented. Justice Scalia appears as an "archconservative"—but a wily one; at his confirmation hearings, for instance, Scalia "adroitly avoided presenting the image of an inflexible conservative ideologue." Justice Thomas, not surprisingly, comes in for the harshest portrayal. Yarbrough dutifully rehearses the Anita Hill controversy and the allegations of Thomas' taste for sexually explicit videos. Yarbrough even makes a point of emphasizing that Thomas was insensitive to his sister. The law clerks to these Justices were a bad lot as well; Yarbrough quotes a more liberal clerk who found the clerks to conservative Justices—uniformly, it seems—"brash, snide, dismissive."

Of course, the book also introduces the members of the Court who favor or at least do not consistently oppose human rights—though with different cues. Justice Kennedy is characterized by "reasonable balance" and "jurisprudential flexibility." Justice Souter is "a forceful defender of his positions and an articulate exponent of the constitutional philosophy [of] his role model, the second Justice Harlan." Ginsburg

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is a "centrist," while Breyer takes a "'flexible, undogmatic' approach to constitutional construction" grounded in "tradition, our people, our conscience, our experience."

After the preview and the introductions of the good guys and bad guys, one is ready to sit back and watch the melodrama unfold. But the expectation is largely disappointed: Yarbrough suddenly switches genres, reciting in considerable detail the majority, concurring, and dissenting arguments in countless major and not-so-major cases, arranged by topics such as "Unenumerated Rights" or "Equal Protection." Their prose and content make these chapters akin to the sort of descriptive memorandum that a fledgling lawyer is sometimes asked to prepare for an experienced partner who does not yet trust the associate to provide any real analysis or even intelligent synthesis. ("You leave the thinking to me; just tell me what the court said.") The main difference is that Yarbrough's law-office memo goes on for almost two hundred pages. If you happen to have a taste for lengthy redactions of Supreme Court opinions, the book will provide hour after hour of satisfaction.

To be sure, the shift in genres is not quite complete. Yarbrough still gives cues about which opinions to applaud or disapprove, mostly through adjectives or adverbs sprinkled into his descriptions. Good opinions are "powerful," "convincing," "thoughtful," "vigorously" or "candidly" argued; bad opinions are "wooden," "naive," "wrongheaded," "highly technical and artificial," "tortured," "troublesome," even "shocking." An especially energetic opinion by Souter is typically "forceful," while a comparable opinion by Scalia is "vehement" or "acerbic."

Very occasionally Yarbrough attempts to supplement his summarizing with what might be classified as analysis, but he avoids taxing the readers' patience with these efforts. In perhaps the most sustained effort at actual analysis in the book, Yarbrough spends several pages contending for a "separationist" construction of the establishment clause. The argument here is comfortingly familiar; it tracks the kinds of arguments made by, say, Justice Souter. Yet rarely does Yarbrough make any reference to the enormous scholarly literature on these issues. Which is probably just as well, because when he does cite scholarship, one cannot be confident that he has understood the sources he cites. For example, Yarbrough describes Daniel Farber as "a major critic of pragmatic jurisprudence"; the attached footnote cites only one article—an article in which Farber strongly *advocates* a pragmatic approach to the Constitution.

Whatever its limitations as a work of scholarship, Yarbrough's book does achieve high marks if it is regarded as a sort of discursive imitation of the Court. Robert Nagel, commenting on the modern Court's pattern of striking down disfavored laws on the grounds that they are "expressions of prejudice or irrationality or invidiousness," has observed that "to a remarkable extent our courts have become places where the name-calling and exaggeration that mark the lower depths of our political debate are given a more acceptable, authoritative form." In this respect, Yarbrough's heavy reliance on ad hominem arguments mirrors a familiar judicial strategy. And even his bureaucratic chapters have a parallel in the judicial opinions that he so laboriously recounts: as Farber has observed, the modern Court's opinions often "almost seem designed to wear the reader into submission as much as actually to persuade."

I began by wondering whether anyone today truly *believes in* constitutional law. With Michelman and Powe, as we saw, there is reason to doubt. But whatever his scholarly shortcomings, in Yarbrough we have at least and at last encountered a true believer. Haven't we?

Perhaps, but there are complications; they hinge on whether it makes sense to call the kind of affirming that goes on here *believing*. Taken together, these books powerfully evince a constitutional culture that is the counterpart of the moral climate described in Alasdair MacIntyre's seminal study *After Virtue*. With the collapse of the classical framework for moral discourse, MacIntyre argued, reasoning about moral questions degenerated into an "emotivism" in which "moral judgments, being expressions of attitude or feeling, are neither true nor false; and agreement in moral judgment is not to be secured by any rational method, for there are none." So a statement like "Honesty is good" is properly understood as a sort of exclamation: "Hurrah for honesty!" Such emotivist judgments may be deeply *felt*; but to say that they are (or are not) *believed* is to commit a category mistake.

In a similar way, modern constitutional discourse evinces a sort of jurisprudential emotivism. That discourse quite plainly lacks any agreed upon framework not merely for assessing whether constitutional arguments are true or false but, more fundamentally, for explaining *what it would even mean* for a constitutional proposition to be true or false. To be sure, people continue to assert—sometimes quite aggressively—that "the Constitution prohibits" (or perhaps requires) affirmative action, or school voucher programs, or abortion rights, or public displays of the Ten Commandments. If such assertions were understood to be representations of something that, however squishy or hard to ascertain, we could at least accept as having a reality independent of lawyerly discourse itself—the

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conventional meaning of the constitutional text, perhaps, or the intentions of some group of flesh-and-blood "framers"—then it would be easier to understand how propositions of constitutional law could in principle be true or false. But in today's legal culture, one can hardly assume that familiar constitutional arguments are offered as representations of that kind. Often the advocates make virtually no attempt to link their assertions to such sources; and the attempts that *are* made are in many instances so flimsy as to provoke the suspicion that they are being offered "under constraint of rhetorical fashion."

In this situation, these books can be taken as points on a spectrum of unattractive alternatives. It seems that, as Yeats' line has it, "the best"—the discerning, that is—may come to "lack all conviction"; others will proceed in varying degrees to argue away—or at least emote away—with "passionate intensity." Powe's and Yarbrough's books can be taken as typifying these opposite responses. Michelman, by my reading, reflects a more complicated response—the response of the cognizant but committed advocate who sees the situation for what it is, who also understands that the rhetorical game must nonetheless be played as if he does *not* see this, but whose self-respect forces him to give the occasional wink to show that he understands full well the tenuous quality of his performance.

So how did we get into this predicament? It would be too simple, I think, just to lay the blame on Justice Brennan, or on the Warren Court, as sometimes happens: surely an adequate explanation would need to look beyond the meager contributions of any mere judge, or even any mere generation of judges. Still, when judges will "mangle history" to support their opinions, when they will "say virtually anything (or nothing)" in order to reach "the right outcome" as measured by "the values of . . . dominant national elites," when their most astute admirers explain away the judges' opinions as having been offered "under constraint of rhetorical fashion," then it can hardly be surprising if the resulting discourse loses its capacity to elicit any response worthy of being called "belief." FT

Shakespearean Variation 65

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea
Are metaphor enough to catch your power,
No more would I to buzzing bee make plea
To mimic an apt companion for the flower.
Some things are best expressed straight out.
To what could we compare our single days,
What improving image find for milk or stout,
What word to hide the way that love decays?
Mixed things only, things that lack
Simplicity, have essence that is hid.
Elemental things, nor front nor back,
But all at once are given and metaphor forbid.
  Your simple single sameness has such might,
  Your light is what makes other things be bright.

Ralph McInerny

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Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity

Dabru Emet *("Speak the Truth") is a statement by more than 170 Jewish scholars issued in September 2000.*

In recent years, there has been a dramatic and unprecedented shift in Jewish and Christian relations. Throughout the nearly two millennia of Jewish exile, Christians have tended to characterize Judaism as a failed religion or, at best, a religion that prepared the way for, and is completed in, Christianity. In the decades since the Holocaust, however, Christianity has changed dramatically. An increasing number of official church bodies, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, have made public statements of their remorse about Christian mistreatment of Jews and Judaism. These statements have declared, furthermore, that Christian teaching and preaching can and must be reformed so that they acknowledge God's enduring covenant with the Jewish people and celebrate the contribution of Judaism to world civilization and to Christian faith itself.

We believe these changes merit a thoughtful Jewish response. Speaking only for ourselves—an interdenominational group of Jewish scholars—we believe it is time for Jews to learn about the efforts of Christians to honor Judaism. We believe it is time for Jews to reflect on what Judaism may now say about Christianity. As a first step, we offer eight brief statements about how Jews and Christians may relate to one another.

Jews and Christians worship the same God. Before the rise of Christianity, Jews were the only worshipers of the God of Israel. But Christians also worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, creator of heaven and earth. While Christian worship is not a viable religious choice for Jews, as Jewish theologians we rejoice that, through Christianity, hundreds of millions of people have entered into relationship with the God of Israel.

Jews and Christians seek authority from the same book—the Bible (what Jews call "Tanakh" and Christians call the "Old Testament"). Turning to it for religious orientation, spiritual enrichment, and communal education, we each take away similar lessons: God created and sustains the universe; God established a covenant with the people Israel; God's revealed word guides Israel to a life of righteousness; and God will ultimately redeem Israel and the whole world. Yet Jews and Christians interpret the Bible differently on many points. Such differences must always be respected.

Christians can respect the claim of the Jewish people upon the land of Israel. The most important event for Jews since the Holocaust has been the reestablishment of a Jewish state in the Promised Land. As members of a biblically based religion, Christians appreciate that Israel was promised—and given—to Jews as the physical center of the covenant between them and God. Many Christians support the State of Israel for reasons far more profound than mere politics. As Jews, we applaud this support. We also recognize that Jewish tradition mandates justice for all non-Jews who reside in a Jewish state.

Jews and Christians accept the moral principles of Torah. Central to the moral principles of Torah is the

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inalienable sanctity and dignity of every human being. All of us were created in the image of God. This shared moral emphasis can be the basis of an improved relationship between our two communities. It can also be the basis of a powerful witness to all humanity for improving the lives of our fellow human beings and for standing against the immoralities and idolatries that harm and degrade us. Such witness is especially needed after the unprecedented horrors of the past century.

Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon. Without the long history of Christian anti-Judaism and Christian violence against Jews, Nazi ideology could not have taken hold nor could it have been carried out. Too many Christians participated in, or were sympathetic to, Nazi atrocities against Jews. Other Christians did not protest sufficiently against these atrocities. But Nazism itself was not an inevitable outcome of Christianity. If the Nazi extermination of the Jews had been fully successful, it would have turned its murderous rage more directly to Christians. We recognize with gratitude those Christians who risked or sacrificed their lives to save Jews during the Nazi regime. With that in mind, we encourage the continuation of recent efforts in Christian theology to repudiate unequivocally contempt of Judaism and the Jewish people. We applaud those Christians who reject this teaching of contempt, and we do not blame them for the sins committed by their ancestors.

The humanly irreconcilable difference between Jews and Christians will not be settled until God redeems the entire world as promised in Scripture. Christians know and serve God through Jesus Christ and the Christian tradition. Jews know and serve God through Torah and the Jewish tradition. That difference will not be settled by one community insisting that it has interpreted Scripture more accurately than the other, nor by exercising political power over the other. Jews can respect Christians' faithfulness to their revelation just as we expect Christians to respect our faithfulness to our revelation. Neither Jew nor Christian should be pressed into affirming the teaching of the other community.

A new relationship between Jews and Christians will not weaken Jewish practice. An improved relationship will not accelerate the cultural and religious assimilation that Jews rightly fear. It will not change traditional Jewish forms of worship, nor increase intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews, nor persuade more Jews to convert to Christianity, nor create a false blending of Judaism and Christianity. We respect Christianity as a faith that originated within Judaism and that still has significant contacts with it. We do not see it as an extension of Judaism. Only if we cherish our own traditions can we pursue this relationship with integrity.

Jews and Christians must work together for justice and peace. Jews and Christians, each in their own way, recognize the unredeemed state of the world as reflected in the persistence of persecution, poverty, and human degradation and misery. Although justice and peace are finally God's, our joint efforts, together with those of other faith communities, will help bring the kingdom of God for which we hope and long. Separately and together, we must work to bring justice and peace to our world. In this enterprise, we are guided by the vision of the prophets of Israel: "It shall come to pass in the end of days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established at the top of the mountains and be exalted above the hills, and the nations shall flow unto it . . . and many peoples shall go and say, 'Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob and He will teach us of His ways and we will walk in His paths'" (Isaiah 2:2-3). FT

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Books In Review

The End of History?

From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life (1500 to the Present). By Jacques Barzun. *HarperCollins. 877 pp. $36.*

***Reviewed by* John J. Reilly**

From Dawn to Decadence is one of those wonderful books that cannot be categorized. Some reviewers have compared it to *The Education of Henry Adams*, the great intellectual autobiography that seemed to sum up the last fin-de-siècle. The comparison does no injustice to either work. Jacques Barzun was born in 1907, and so has lived through a not insignificant slice of the period he covers, but even he did not know Descartes personally. And yet in some ways *From Dawn to Decadence* reads less like a history than it does like a personal memoir of the last half-millennium, with people and topics selected chiefly because the author is interested in them. The effect is delightful, though sometimes a little disorienting. Perhaps the one thing you can say for sure about *From Dawn to Decadence* is that it provides the most cheerful explanation you are ever likely to get for why Western culture is ending.

Jacques Barzun really needs no introduction. Anyone interested in William James, the great Romantic composers, the role of race in historical writing, or a dozen other subjects has already encountered him somewhere. (A book he coauthored with Henry Graff, *The Modern Researcher*, sticks in my mind after twenty-five years as a philosophy of historiography disguised as a reference guide.) In *From Dawn to Decadence*, he manages to touch on just about all his lifelong interests, and without turning the book into a mere anthology.

The format is loosely chronological, with the great era of the post-medieval, "modern" West divided into several lesser ages. The whole text is broken up into digestible chunks of commentary and biography. We get assessments, sometimes quite idiosyncratic ones, of almost all the great names of the modern era, but many of the biographies are of persons the author deems worthy-but-obscure. Some of these subjects really are virtually forgotten, such as the ingenious eighteenth-century polymath, Dr. Georg Lichtenberg. Others are just a bit neglected, such as the senior Oliver Wendell Holmes. (Barzun manages to praise this physician and essayist while barely mentioning his jurist son.) A particularly entertaining feature of the book is the brief, apt quotations set into the margins. Had it not been for *From Dawn to Decadence*, I would never have known that Thursday was bear-baiting day at the court of Elizabeth I.

From Dawn to Decadence has only a minimal amount of political and military narrative, which is something of a drawback since the author routinely makes unexplained allusions to people and events that may no longer be common knowledge. (Do undergraduates today know what Stanley said to Livingston? I'm afraid to ask.) And then there are the fact-checking lapses inevitable in a work of this scope. These will allow readers to entertain themselves by looking for mistakes. More than one reviewer has noted that modern calculus does not use Newton's notation, as Barzun says, but that of Leibniz. However, this review may be the only place you will read that those long-range shells the Germans fired at Paris (and Barzun) during the First World War did not come from Big Berthas, but from Krupp's *Pariskanone*.

Parlor games aside, the author corrects errors that are far more important than the ones he makes. He points out, for instance, that, no, M. Jourdain did not speak prose, and that Molière knew this as well as anyone. It is anachronistic, he reminds us, to suppose that Galileo was tried because the Inquisition believed the Copernican model threatened man's place in the universe. Rousseau's works cannot be made to say, he observes with a note of exasperation, that Rousseau was a revolutionary who wished mankind to return to a state of nature. Intellectual superstitions of this sort are probably immortal, but it is a good idea to try to correct them at least once every five hundred years.

While a book as genial as this one can hardly be accused of promoting anything as crudely Germanic as a theory of history, it does present a sketch of the last half-millennium. According to Barzun, the West has been working out a cultural impulse that it received in the Renaissance, an impulse that had become exhausted by the end of the twentieth century. This impulse was not an ideology or an agenda but an expandable list of desires, particular forms of which can be detected throughout all the cultural and political controversies of the great era. The names of these desires are helpfully capitalized wherever they are mentioned, so that Emancipation is graphically shown to play a role in every major controversy from the Reformation to the women's suffrage movement. Another example is Primitivism, the perennial impulse to return to the original text, to the early constitution, to the uncluttered state of the beginning. Other trends of the modern era have been informed by the desires for Abstraction, Reductivism, and Self-consciousness. Ideas like these can

John J. Reilly *is the author of* Apocalypse & Future: Notes on the Cultural History of the 21st Century *(Xlibris).*

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hardly be said to have been the motor of Western history, but looking for their various incarnations over the centuries does make it much easier to view the era as a whole.

Barzun laconically informs us that late medieval Europe was a "decadent" society. I myself had thought that Richard Gilman had permanently retired that word with his study *Decadence: The Strange Life of an Epithet,* but Barzun may persuade readers that "decadence" is neither a moral category nor a bit of implicit vitalism. Rather, Barzun says, the term "decadent" may properly be used of any social situation that is blocked, where people entertain goals for which they will not tolerate the means. Decadent societies tend to become labyrinthine in both their cultures and their styles of government, as people create small accommodations within a larger unsatisfactory context. Decadent periods can be sweet, as Talleyrand remarked of pre-Revolutionary France, but partly because they are obviously ephemeral.

Decadence may end in the explosion of a revolution, by which Barzun means the violent transfer of power and property in the name of an idea. Revolutions are great simplifiers that pave over the labyrinths and open up possibilities that were unimaginable just a few years previously. There have been four of these revolutions during the modern era, each more or less defining an age. There was the religious revolution of the Reformation, which first stated themes that would recur through the rest of the era. There was the monarch's revolution of the seventeenth century, in which the aristocracy was tamed and large, centralized states began to appear. The monarchs, of course, got their comeuppance in the liberal revolution at the end of the eighteenth century. Most recently, every throne, power, and dominion was shaken by the social revolution at the beginning of the twentieth.

Barzun seems to believe that the twentieth century was so traumatized by the First World War that it was never able to fully exploit the positive possibilities in what he calls the "Cubist Decade" that preceded the war's outbreak. Rather, the Age of Modernism (not to be confused with the modern era) largely confined itself to analysis and destruction. Thanks to the First World War, the more distant past became unusable: the sense of living in a completely new age left the past with nothing to say. No restraints remained on the expression of the desires that had characterized the whole modern era. The result was that, by century's end, the chief remaining impulses in Western culture had developed to a theoretical maximum. So ends an age.

This conclusion would be depressing, were it not so reminiscent of similar conclusions in earlier eras. Barzun notes that at the end of the fifteenth century, some people held that the sixth millennium of the world was about to end—and history along with it. As is often the case with this kind of sentiment, the people who shared it were on to something, if the end of history is taken to mean the end of history as they knew it. Barzun ends the book on a note of hopeful speculation. He looks back from a more distant time on our immediate future, which he supposes will be an age when history will wholly disappear from even the minds of the educated. Indeed, so completely will the modern age be forgotten that its rediscovery will have an impact quite as revolutionary as the impact that classical culture had on the late medieval world. The result, Barzun hopes, will be another renaissance, when the young and talented will again exclaim what joy it is to be alive.

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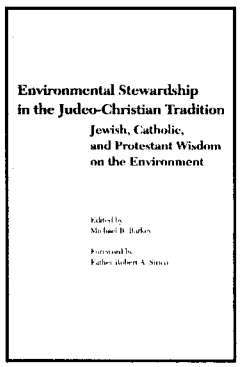

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Picturing Protestantism

Protestants and Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture, and the Age of American Mass Production. By David Morgan. *Oxford University Press. 417 pp. $35.*

Reviewed by **Ralph C. Wood**

In accord with much of Scripture itself, the churches of the Reformation have emphasized the ear over the eye: *fides ex auditu.* The conviction that faith comes less by seeing than by hearing (Romans 10:17) undergirded the Protestant renewal of the Church through the preached and sung Word. Luther famously urged his people to "stick your eyes in your ears" when listening to sermons, so that the *evangelium* might strike their consciences as visual images could not. The God who has fashioned His own image in Jesus Christ is a jealous God, Calvin insisted, who shall have no other images before Him. Thus the Protestant preeminence in music and literature—in Bach and Milton and Herbert, in Donne and Blake, in the great Victorian poets and novelists, in T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden, perhaps even in Charles Ives and John Updike—finds no concomitant greatness in painting and sculpture, at least within the Anglophone world.

David Morgan's excellent book does not claim any aesthetic eminence for the visual art produced by American Protestants. But he does demonstrate—in mountainous detail, with abundant illustration, and by way of rigorous scholarly research—that American Protestants were once driven by a powerful visual piety. As a historian who emphasizes material things no less than ideas and beliefs, Morgan seeks to show that our lives are formed chiefly not by the great monuments of art and culture but by prosaic objects and ordinary commodities. Mass-produced images, he convincingly argues, have been among the most powerful influences on American Protestant life.

By the early part of the nineteenth century, the ready availability of printed material had given rise to our first mass culture. It was made possible, Morgan shows, by a convergence of several forces: national aspiration, mass migration, and an economy based more on consumption than production. It was also prompted by varied new means of communication: "mail order, a reliable postal system, uniform currency, widespread

Ralph C. Wood *is University Professor at Baylor University.*

The Fingerprints of God

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Robert Farrar Capon

How do we understand God? The Trinity? The Bible? The basic tenets of the Christian faith? Much of the time we use images to think about them – and much of the time, unfortunately, they're the wrong images. In *The Fingerprints of God* best-selling author Robert Farrar Capon takes readers on a fascinating sleuthing project, using his own uniquely developed history of images to find evidence of the Divine Suspect in our midst.

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literacy, and dependable transportation via an ever-expanding infrastructure of roads, railroads, canals, and steam-powered vessels." The standard way of reading this revolution in mass culture is to see it as having an inexorably secularizing effect. Morgan argues, quite to the contrary, that Protestant evangelicals so decisively shaped the new print culture that they were able to set their stamp on the entire national ethos.

THE CHIEF FORCES driving this cultural and religious revolution were the illustrated texts produced by the American Tract Society (ATS) and the American Sunday School Union. The ATS was organized in 1825 on the premise that "the press is the grand medium of communication in all parts of the missionary world." Against the complaint that the Word should be heard more than read, the ATS replied that the oral medium limits the spread of the gospel to mere local cultures while the miracle of the printing press enables the evangelizing of entire cultures. "The pen is an artificial tongue," the ATS declared, but when its products are set into print, they have permanent effect, unlike the vanishing voice. The tract, in turn, could sharpen and simplify the gospel as the lengthy and often ponderous Bible could not.

Morgan is right to mark the founding of the ATS as a decisive moment in American religious history. It meant that the Protestant churches came to share the new national urgency about education and literacy. They believed that a reading citizenry is at once the most readily evangelized and also the most likely to uphold republican ideals. Just as print advertisements had proved immensely effective in commercial life, so could Christian tracts "sell" this joint republican-Christian message. (Even though revivals were not centered upon the printed and illustrated Word, they partook of this same commodifying ethos, as the saving decision for Christ became analogous to the consumer's choice.)

Yet evangelism was no longer limited to garnering souls for heaven. The mission of the Church was also to be realized on earth. Far from being alien to the social gospel, evangelical tracts promoted moral reform, philanthropic giving, benevolent agencies, and especially the mother-tended home. The aim of this first mass propagation of the gospel was to make the postmillennial kingdom dawn first on these democratic shores and illumine the entire world. As the one nation that combined perfect religious and political liberty, the United States would serve as the flagship of western Protestant civilization.

THIS CONFLATION OF national and religious aims would have lasting consequences. At first the Protestant tract movement seemed radical in its ethical rigor. Its early advocates sought, for example, to end both slavery and war. But these drastic demands were soon subordinated to the more convenient and easily realized aims of the young Protestant republic. Native Americans were depicted not as noble savages but as barbarians who blighted our Christian civilization. Negro slaves were limned as happy Christian simpletons whose masters were guilty not so much because they sinfully shackled their fellow creatures but because their political demands threatened national unity. Roman Catholics were shown as drunken louts and superstitious heathens who needed amalgamating as well as converting. The impoverished working classes were displayed as intemperate and wayward souls whose improvidence proved a burden to taxpayers. The ideal American Protestant culture was envisioned, by contrast, as a tranquil rural affair presided over by mothers who instilled in their children the Christian virtues of thrift and honesty and abstinence from worldly vices.

During the latter half of the century, Morgan argues, American visual piety underwent a seismic if gradual shift. From having had primarily a didactic purpose—to illustrate the truth of God's biblical Word—Protestant pictorial efforts sought increasingly to prompt personal piety, espe-

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cially among children. If children could be reached for the gospel, so could their parents. Children, in turn, could best be influenced through sentimental images of pity and comfort on the one hand, fear and shame on the other. Hence the birth of the chalk talk, where pastors and others sought to overcome the limits of the catechism by sketching biblical stories on blackboards. Entertainment and amusement thus became essential tools in the marketing of evangelical faith, as American commerce and American Protestantism were ever more fully entwined.

For a nation and a religion increasingly at ease with each other, there seemed but little need for the venerable Puritan and the more recent revivalist demand for radical conversion and conscious submission to the will of God. These extravagant practices among old-style evangelicals gradually gave way to a new-style liberalism built on the idea of Christian nurture. Horace Bushnell, that idea's most famous advocate, held that the organic development of character can best be assured through wholesome images and unconscious influences rather than doctrinal inculcation. The most wholesome of all images is surely that of history's most influential figure, Jesus himself. "It is the grandeur of his character," wrote Bushnell, "which constitutes the chief power of his ministry, not his miracles or teachings apart from his character."

Devotional images of a haloed and idealized Jesus, especially his face, thus came into immense vogue. Werner Sallman's *Head of Christ* and Heinrich Hofmann's *Christ in Gethsemane* were but the most popular among many hundreds of such sentimental images of the Savior. There also arose a concomitant interest in Jesus' childhood. Just as the boy-Christ underwent his own development of faith, so did the new graded and illustrated Sunday School lessons seek to insure full spiritual consciousness at the end of adolescence.

Morgan concludes his magisterial survey of nineteenth and early twentieth century American visual piety by noting that the triumph of the suggestive image over illustrated text constitutes a decidedly modern and post-Enlightenment turn. It moves from the rational to the affectional, from clearly conveyed knowledge to nonrationally evoked feelings. The outcome was decisive. Whereas the didactic images of the early nineteenth century sought to create a culture of character that "endorsed moderation, self-restraint, even self-denial," the devotional images that emerged in the latter half of the century helped produce a culture of personality. This new kind of visual piety avoided "effeminate" notions of a suffering and humiliated Christ in favor of a strong Personality who exuded energy and self-fulfillment, strength and self-expression, assertive masculinity and self-possession.

David Morgan resists the temptation to present his history as a tract for our times. He refuses to make easy judgmental links between past and present, as he might well have done. Morgan could have shown, for example, that the sleazy evangelical slogans and the trite praise songs of our own time have their origin in the visual piety of our Protestant forebears. It is indeed tempting to view the artistic and religious movement that Morgan charts as a huge mistake. Yet as Richard John Neuhaus once warned, most of us would not be Christians at all were it not for the popular piety of Christendom. It is also true, as Mark A. Noll has observed, that a new American nation could hardly have been built without the symbiosis of its Protestant religion and its republican politics.

Yet it is still necessary to ask why Catholicism has managed to remain a popular religion while engendering

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visual art that makes the Faith rigorous rather than flaccid (though Catholics, to be sure, have produced their own full share of religious kitsch). The answer does not lie merely in Protestant biblicism and iconoclasm. Might it be that our Protestant churches failed to incarnate a communal life of belief and worship sufficiently arresting to invigorate the artistic imagination? Dietrich Bonhoeffer made an argument along these lines after his first American tour in 1930-31. Bonhoeffer complained that this nation's Christianity is based upon an unfree kind of freedom, "a Protestantism without Reformation." American Christians, who once fled persecution, have created here a comfortable Protestant Establishment piety that is unfortunately susceptible to complacency and sentimentality. In seeking to tend to the business of the nation, Bonhoeffer explained, American Protestantism has largely surrendered its radical Christological critique both of itself and the nation. David Morgan's illuminating book bears out Bonhoeffer's foreboding contention in deeply instructive ways.

Toward Purity of Heart

CASSIAN THE MONK. By COLUMBA STEWART. *Oxford University Press. 286 pp. $60 cloth, $19.95 paper.*

JOHN CASSIAN: THE CONFERENCES. Translated and Annotated by BONIFACE RAMSEY. *Paulist Press. 886 pp. $39.95.*

Reviewed by **Robert Louis Wilken**

THE GOAL OF LIFE for Christians is the kingdom of God, but early in the Church's history the men and women of the desert realized that the practice of the Christian life required more proximate goals. In their writings the phrase used most often to depict what one strives for in life's daily struggles was "purity of heart." Without purity of heart, all yearning for holiness and all desire for God come to naught, for hour by hour, even minute by minute, we are bent and shaped by distractions and wayward thoughts, many good and legitimate, that drive our minds and take our affections captive.

All the great spiritual writers have known this, but few in the Church's history understood it better, experienced it more deeply, and wrote about it with more insight than John Cassian, the monk from southern Gaul who lived in the early part of the fifth century. Yet Cassian is not well known except in monastic circles and among connoisseurs of the spiritual life. While the sayings and stories of the desert fathers have become popular, and names such as Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, the Syrian Jacob of Sarug, and medievals Richard and Bernard and John of the Cross and Theresa, are often invoked, Cassian has languished. In part this is because of the vagaries of translation. Only selections have been available in contemporary English. To have Cassian in full one had to turn to the nineteenth-century translations in the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers.

But perhaps Cassian's time has come. In the last two years there has appeared not only a first-class monograph on him by the fine scholar Columba Stewart of St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, but also an excellent translation of the whole of Cassian's major work, *The Conferences*, his presentation and interpretation of the spiritual teachings of the monks of the Egyptian desert. The translator, Boniface Ramsey, O.P., is a seasoned student of the church fathers and an accomplished translator; for this task, it is not beside the point to note that he is also a pastor of a large urban parish, and thus able to present Cassian as he was intended to be read, as a guide to the Christian life. In the same way Stewart's book is not simply a book about "who Cassian was"; it is, he tells us, also a book "about who he is for us." One would not go far wrong to look upon these two publications as upscale self-help books.

ROBERT LOUIS WILKEN *is the William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of the History of Christianity at the University of Virginia.*

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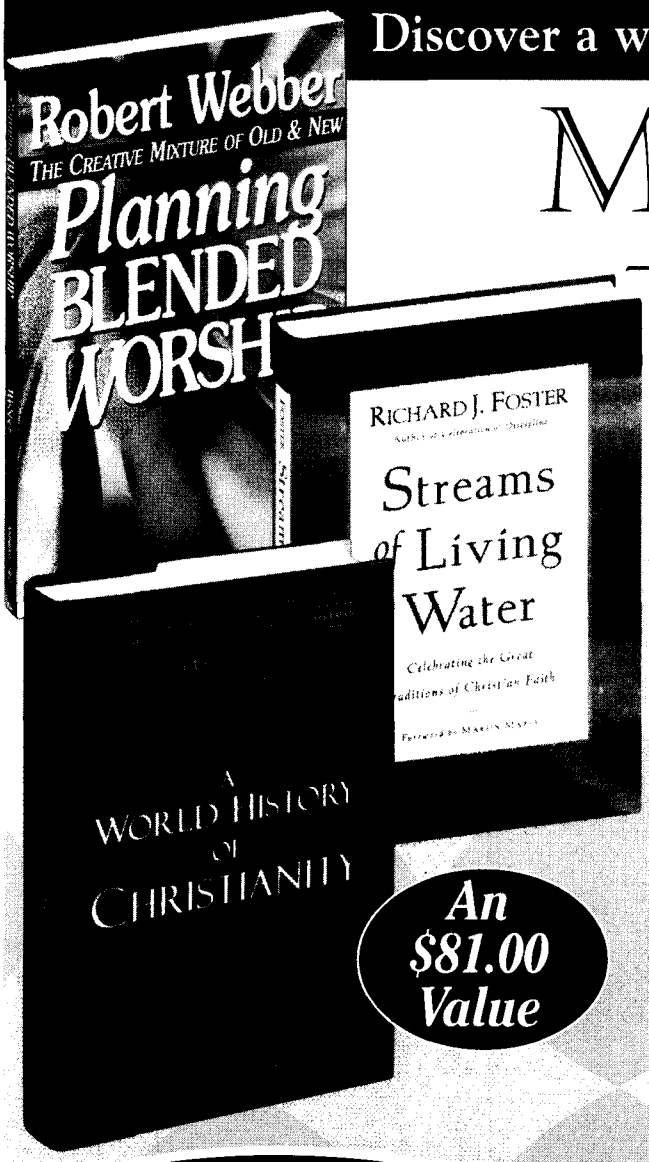
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JOHN CASSIAN was born in the middle of the fourth century in what is present day Romania, and as a young man he became a monk in Bethlehem. From there he traveled to Egypt, where he lived for many years and apprenticed himself to the ascetic masters of the Egyptian desert. Eventually he returned to the West and settled in southern France near Marseilles, where he founded two monasteries. There he drew on what he had learned in Egypt and his own experience to compose two works that have become classics, *The Institutes*, a kind of introduction to the religious life, and *The Conferences*, a fuller and more mature exposition offering richer fare for the advanced. *The Conferences* takes the form of extended interviews with individual monks who are named and whose words are sometimes prefaced by personal anecdotes. (Father Ramsey is also due to publish a translation of *The Institutes*, again with Paulist Press, this fall.)

Here is how the conference with Abba Serenus on the "principalities" begins:

> When everything . . . that the solemnity of the day demanded and the congregation in church had been dismissed, we returned to the old man's cell and there we first splendidly refreshed. For in place of the brine which, along with a little bit of oil added to it, was his customary daily meal, he mixed in some sauce and poured over it more oil than usual. For when anyone is about to take his daily meal he puts in a few drops of oil—not so that he may enjoy some kind of pleasant flavor from the taste of it (indeed, the amount is so small that it is hardly enough to smear the passages of his throat, never mind to pass through it), but so that by doing this he may weaken the boastfulness of heart that usually creeps in flatteringly and surreptitiously with a stricter abstinence. . . . Then he put out some salt and three olives each. Finally, in addition to these other things, he produced a basket containing ground chick peas . . . from which we took only five morsels each, two prunes and a fig apiece. For whoever has exceeded this amount in the desert is blameworthy. When the meal was finished . . . the old man said: "Pose your question, which we have put off answering until now."

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Cassian was a natural teacher and his writings are carefully organized and always concrete. He realized that the path to spiritual maturity was not attained by reaching for lofty ideals. Specific areas of behavior have to be looked at one by one, broken down into parts, worked on in bits and pieces until over time one could begin to notice change. He liked to make lists: the eight vices (gluttony, lust, greed, anger, melancholy, sloth, vainglory, and pride), the three renunciations, four ways of interpreting the Scripture, three kinds of fornication, etc. By the time he wrote some of this was commonplace (he learned the eight vices from Evagrius, the most sophisticated thinker of the Egyptian desert), but he adds his own insight and experience to what he had received. It was not only what he said but his skill as a teacher that accounts for his popularity over the centuries. Though he was not the first to make a list of eight vices, it was from him that later generations learned to group the vices in that way.

Here is how he handles the list of four kinds of prayer given in 1 Timothy 2:1: "I urge first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made." Before beginning his discussion of prayer, Cassian realizes he needs to put to rest certain misconceptions. Cassian knew that "prayer" is too general a category to be of much help in teaching someone to pray. Prayer is varied and takes different forms at different times. A person prays one way, he says, when he is happy and another way when burdened by a weight of sadness, one way when enjoying spiritual successes and another when oppressed by troubles, one way when begging pardon for sins and another when asking for grace or some virtue. This being said, he can now analyze the different occasions for prayer in light of the list given by Paul.

As an elderly man Cassian also wrote a theological work, "On the Incarnation of the Lord Against Nestorius," but as a thinker he does not move in the company of the great theological minds of the early church—he is not an Augustine or an Athanasius. His interest is always in the formation of souls (that is, how one lives), and his books are practical and down to earth, filled with direction and psychological insight, even "tips" for life. In Cassian's world temptation, not heresy, was the enemy. *The Conferences* is a book to be read as one practices and practiced as one reads, digested slowly over time, as one might read, for example, St. John of the Cross' *Spiritual Canticle.* Cassian's aim is to change the behavior and attitudes and affections of his readers, not their ideas. There are chapters on discretion, renunciation, desire, the vices, changeableness of the soul, prayer, chastity, perfection, friendship, spiritual knowledge, making promises. Ramsey's translation makes it easy to enter into Cassian's world so that one can return changed to one's own world.

Columba Stewart's book is a scholarly monograph that situates Cassian in his historical context, searches out the sources of his thinking, and analyzes the central features of his spiritual teaching. Yet Stewart writes from within the tradition of which Cassian was a part, and is eager to present him as a living master of the spiritual life. I recall an electrifying moment a few years ago at a learned conference on the church fathers when Fr. Stewart stood up and challenged a speaker who was treating the early monks as though they belonged to a forgotten and moribund past. He reminded her that people still practiced what these monks had written about centuries ago.

Stewart discusses Cassian the theologian, his ascetical teaching, and other matters, but fully a third of the book is devoted to prayer. Everything Cassian teaches about prayer depends on the Bible. Cassian does not mean that one learns how to pray by studying the Scriptures; for him rather the words of the Bible are the primary vehicle that one uses to pray. This requires of course that large sections of the Bible be memorized, chiefly the psalms, and also that one's prayer take the form of repeating a biblical verse or phrase. In Cassian's words: "The unceasing recitation of the Holy Words should bring the soul into a climate, into a disposition, from which its own prayer can arise spontaneously." He begins with the words of the Bible, and as these words are repeated they become our words and free us to speak to God out of our deepest self. As Cassian puts it: "Everything lies in the soul's inner sanctuary." But we need to be led to this sanctuary, and it is the words of the Bible that line the path.

Stewart concludes his discussion with what Cassian calls "fiery prayer,"

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that intense communion with God that is "known and experienced by very few." This prayer is exuberant, fervent, pure, joyful, beyond words, and, as one can readily understand, of brief duration. Yet it must have happened often enough for the ancient monks to talk about it and for Cassian to find the words to describe it. In a beautiful final chapter Stewart helps us understand what Cassian meant by "fiery prayer," but he also shows how his teaching fits into the larger tradition that formed the practice of the great spiritual masters of the Christian past. "In the end," writes Stewart, "his importance is greatest not to the historical theologians who puzzle over his thought but to those of both East and West who recognize in him the great charism of Teacher."

It is serendipitous that Stewart's monograph should appear shortly after Ramsey's translation. For now one can read Ramsey and turn to Stewart for clarification or read Stewart and open the pages of Ramsey for confirmation. Together they invite us into a world that has much to teach us.

That Loveless Century

THE SEXUAL CENTURY. By ETHEL SPECTOR PERSON. *Yale University Press. 387 pp. $35.*

***Reviewed by* Paul R. McHugh**

IN *THE SEXUAL CENTURY*, Ethel Spector Person, a New York psychoanalyst associated with Columbia University, presents a collection of her essays on sexual development and pathology written over the last twenty-five years. Here one finds Dr. Person's reflections on such topics as cross-dressing, transsexualism, homosexuality, sexual fantasies, and the psychological differences between men and women.

Dr. Person employs all the standard, and now scientifically dubious, Freudian explanatory devices in her arguments, including castration anxiety, the oedipal complex, even penis envy. That, along with the typical Olympian style that Freudians are prone to employ even—or especially—when they are saying nothing different from what others have said before them, deprives this book of much sustaining interest. To make sex boring is difficult, but as many others have noted the Freudians, after a century of practice, have mastered the trick.

Two impressions occurred to me in reading these pages that reflect on the evolution and standing of Freudian thought and practice at the turn of the century. The first is that Dr. Person's study provides further evidence of the retreat of psychoanalysis from its initial and provocative claims to be the "basic science of human nature." The second is to notice again the remarkable—but all too human—tendency to claim credit but to avoid blame for actions one has championed. Dr. Person claims credit for her discipline in liberating us from repressive sexual moralism, but takes no responsibility for the deadly consequences of sexual "liberation" that we face today.

THIS BOOK IS devoted to the discussion of sex and its deviations and makes no attempt to employ psychoanalytic views to illuminate other aspects of human psychological constitution or social behavior. Freud and his followers made larger claims for their ideas. They asserted that our libidinous attitudes, drives, and conflicts explained everything—our fears and failures, of course, but also our false claims to rationality, especially as related to our creations, life choices, commitments, and character. Based on these opinions Freud saw himself as a new Copernicus and a "conquistador" from psychology. He preened himself as an authority in the humanities as well as in the clinic, a scientist whose understanding of sex, and of our tendencies to deny and repress its power, gave him the key to understanding human nature and made him a bear-

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er of the cold light of fact to an ignorant and myth-ridden civilization.

No one—especially no scientist of mental life—believes that anymore. The power of reason—and how that power can be a force for good even as it can be disrupted by disease or deflected by conflicts—is evident to all. Our sexual natures are a part of us, but far from the fundamental part. We are both freer and more complex than classical psychoanalysis ever acknowledged.

Not even in the domain of therapy do psychoanalysts reign unchallenged any longer. Cognitive/behavioral therapy, specialty group therapies, behavior treatments, and psychopharmacology all have evidence-based authority in the treatments of anxiety, depression, alcohol/drug addiction, and psychosocial demoralization.

The turn of a psychoanalyst such as Dr. Person towards the rare and esoteric sexual disorders is not an advance into new territory but a surrender of the main concerns of psychiatry to other investigators and clinicians. But even in this clinical cul-de-sac Dr. Person's conceptual energy is as depleted as her ideas are shopworn.

This is especially disappointing if one seeks answers to practical questions that Dr. Person's long experience in the sex clinics might deliver. For example, even though their numbers are vanishingly few, a close study of patients with sex-change operations might demonstrate what outcomes constitute a success or failure of this life-threatening operation. Such knowledge would help us decide about its application and utility. Yet Dr. Person apparently does not see this issue as interesting. She describes her experience with these patients by telling psychoanalytically inspired stories about them. But her final opinion—anticipated by any reader accustomed to the fixed rails of Freudian thought—seems at once trivial and untrue: if a patient has long believed that his gender of rearing was in error and really wants this surgical operation, he and/or she best have it. Dr. Person's distinctions between sex and gender—the one given by nature, the other constructed by culture—are straightforward. But they are the very ideas that lead most of us to recognize that surgical sex-change is nonsense, resting as it does on the preposterous assumption that one's biologic constitution is as much a malleable artifact as one's dress.

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IN THREE CHAPTERS on the correlation between sexual fantasies and sexual experiences, Dr. Person makes her only attempt at an evidence-based opinion. She demonstrates—from questionnaires given to college students—that fantasies and experiences are highly correlated, and concludes from this that the experiences provoke the fantasies. But of course a correlation between observations does not demonstrate causality; the more likely explanation for Dr. Person's correlative data is that heightened sexual fantasies stimulate the search for sexual experiences. Yet she does not even discuss this possibility.

As one who has watched psychoanalysis evolve in America over the last half of the twentieth century, I find this book a paltry end-product—stuck on sex and making crude errors over cause and correlation. Yet I find it hard to feel pity for Dr. Person: if she is surrendering the broad claims of psychoanalysis and turning essentially to sexology, then she has something else to answer for.

Dr. Person is not alone in claiming that Freudian psychoanalysis was a major force influencing sexual thought and practice in the twentieth century. But the title of her book, *The Sexual Century*, suggests that Dr. Person believes this influence to be wholly beneficial. She writes, "Sexual liberation has . . . transformed the way [we] regard our bodies and live our sexual lives. . . . These changes in attitudes and behaviors are . . . the product of the ideology of self-fulfillment coupled with medical advances that have made sex safer, less likely to have unwanted consequences." Even a casual reading of this statement provokes one to wonder how Dr. Person, given that she labors daily in a great American hospital, can ignore the awful results of the liberation she celebrates.

I WORK IN such a place and see it awash with the detritus of sexual liberation. I oversee the treatment of hundreds of patients afflicted with sexually transmitted diseases—many wondering who betrayed them. The HIV virus is a diabolic life form. In the 1970s, when Dr. Person began her writings, no one could have predicted—or even imagined—the biocharacteristics that make it so lethal. But no longer can one offer the excuse of ignorance. The liberationist doctrine certainly helped—along with such other changes in our world as consumerism and ready contraception—to develop the hosts and environments within which the HIV virus flourishes.

The brightest and wealthiest of my HIV-afflicted patients can hold out against its ravages by means of the most complicated of medical/pharmacologic regimens. But most poor patients with HIV are unable to afford or sustain these treatments, and we watch their progressive decline in a fashion one would not wish on anyone—a worsening debilitative weakness, aggressive superimposed infections, dementia, apathy, and death.

In fact, the treatments we presently have (that carry, one should not fail to mention, their own toxic, potentially lethal, side effects) will sooner or later—mostly sooner—fail in their primary purpose as the virus mutates into a resistant form and erupts with new vengeance. I can present many stories about these patients, their impairments, and their fears for the future. Some of them were at one time counterparts of the fantasizing college students Dr. Person studied. But they are now tragic human beings who occasionally will mention to me how they never expected—or were warned about—the medical risks of their sexual behavior. A peculiar kind of blindness is required to work every day in a large American municipal hospital and still laud sexual liberation.

Psychoanalysis was one of the Big Ideas of the twentieth century. This book shows that it may soon join the

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other leading creeds from that loveless century, Marxism and Eugenics, in the sizable dustbin of history reserved for the doctrines of that time.

Awakening to What?

The Fourth Great Awakening and the Future of Egalitarianism. By Robert William Fogel. *University of Chicago Press. 383 pp. $25.*

***Reviewed by* David R. Carlin**

The framework for this book by economic historian Robert William Fogel, 1993 Nobel Prize-winner in economics, is borrowed, as the author fully acknowledges, from a work published in 1978: *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reforms*, written by the late William G. McLoughlin, a history professor at Brown University. To understand Fogel's book, it turns out, a quick survey of McLoughlin's is first needed.

McLoughlin identified five "awakenings" (or religious revitalization movements) in American history. The first was the Puritan awakening, which began in England in 1610 and lasted till 1640. The settlements of New England and, at least in part, Virginia were aspects of that movement. The second was the famous "Great Awakening" (1730-1760) associated with Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield. Third, in McLoughlin's telling, was what is more commonly known as the "Second Great Awakening" (1800-1830). (The numbering becomes a little confusing at this point, since most historians have not, with McLoughlin, counted the early Puritan movement as an "awakening." They start counting with Edwards and Whitefield, while McLoughlin starts counting with Plymouth Rock.)

If the First Great Awakening was Calvinistic, the Second Great Awakening was Arminian. The former stressed human "inability," while the latter stressed man's freedom, his capacity to cooperate with God in the work of the soul's salvation. Small wonder such a development took place in a nation that had just won its independence from a great power and was now self-confidently engaged in settling a continent. If Americans could achieve this much,

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couldn't they at least lend a hand when God tries to save their souls?

THE FOURTH REVIVAL was called by McLoughlin "the Third Great Awakening" (1890-1920). This was the age of the Social Gospel. If the Great Awakening was Calvinist and the Second Great Awakening Arminian, this Third Awakening was downright liberal and modernist. It was modernist in the theological sense, accommodating to evolutionary theory and German higher criticism. But it was modernist in a social-political sense as well. Earlier awakenings had emphasized the spiritual transformation that must take place within the individual soul. The Third Awakening focused on material conditions. How can we expect men and women to lead Christian lives in circumstances of poverty, slum housing, excessive working hours, dangerous working conditions, periodic unemployment, poor schooling for their children, and so forth? If the Second Awakening called on sinners to give up drink, the Third called on society to eliminate conditions that drive men to drink.

Each of the great awakenings, McLoughlin argues, had important political consequences. The first paved the way for the American Revolution, the second gave rise to the abolition movement, and the third supplied the moral and intellectual basis for Progressivism and the New Deal.

The Fourth Great Awakening, McLoughlin says, began about 1960 and—since all previous awakenings had a life span of thirty years—could be expected to run until 1990. (Remember, McLoughlin was writing in 1978, in the middle of the journey.) If the Third Awakening, being modernist, veered some distance from traditional Christian orthodoxy, the Fourth made no pretense of being Christian at all. McLoughlin identifies this awakening with the great American cultural revolution of the 1960s and '70s, its beginning in the San Francisco Beat movement, followed by the explosion of interest in Zen and other Eastern religious alternatives. Then came "experimental life-styles associated with drugs, the hippies, the practice of occultism, and rock concerts." The famous Woodstock concert of 1969 was a kind of sacramental event for the Fourth Awakening, analogous to the revivalistic camp meeting of earlier awakenings.

IN HIS OWN BOOK, Fogel makes a number of changes to McLoughlin's thesis, though keeping the basic framework. For one, he omits the first revival, the Puritan Awakening; instead he starts counting with the Great Awakening. More importantly, he argues that the time period for each of the awakenings is much longer, so that the tail end of one overlaps with the beginning of the next. He then divides each of the these more protracted movements into three phases: what McLoughlin would call the awakening itself, Fogel thinks is only the first phase, that of religious revival. Once the people are stirred in their souls they push the moral implications of the revival onto the nation's political agenda. At the end of each episode, the dominance of that political program is effectively challenged. In other words: Phase I, the religious revival proper; Phase II, the political revolution; Phase III, the decline and fall of both.

Thus the First Great Awakening runs from 1730 to 1820. This is divided into Phase I, the religious revival (1730-60); Phase II, the American Revolution (1760-90); and Phase III, the breakup of the revolutionary coalition (1790-1820). The Second Great Awakening lasts from 1800 to 1920: Phase I, the religious revival (1800-40); Phase II, abolitionism, Civil War, etc. (1840-70); Phase III, Darwinian crisis, urban crisis (1870-1920). The Third Great Awakening began in 1890 and has not yet ended: Phase I, religious revival (1890-1930); Phase II, New Deal, civil rights movement, feminism (1890-1970); Phase III, conservatives gains, liberal losses (1970-not yet ended).

The most significant departure Fogel makes from McLoughlin's scheme is in his characterization of the religious nature of the Fourth Awakening (1960 to present). For McLoughlin, this was "leftist" and non-Christian (even anti-Christian); its typical heroes were Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, and Janis Joplin. For Fogel it is "rightist" and predominantly Evangelical Protestant. It began in 1960 with the rise of conservative Protestantism and still hasn't ended. The political stage really began in 1990 with the rise of the pro-life, pro-family, and media re-

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form movements on a truly massive scale; its political decline has not yet begun. Its agenda is not sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll. Rather it is to end abortion and to prevent gay marriage. Its typical heroes are Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Ralph Reed.

Now it is not clear that Fogel's revision of McLoughlin gets the story right. A great cultural-spiritual upheaval did take place in America beginning in the 1960s, dominated by antinomians who proclaimed personal liberty as the supreme moral value (hence the drug revolution, the sexual revolution, the abortion revolution, etc.). Then a conservative Protestant counterrevolution began (the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, the Promise Keepers, and so on). The culture war between these two parties is still going on; it remains far from clear which will prevail, if either. Fogel breaks from McLoughlin's view without explaining why, and shows us no good reason to take it for granted that the conservative religious party will prevail.

American politics, as well as the culture from which this politics springs, has always, says Fogel, held equality to be a paramount value. In the earlier part of the nation's history, when the United States was still a predominantly agricultural country, this value took the form of "equality of opportunity." But a change took place as the nation industrialized and urbanized; equality of opportunity was no longer sufficient. Hence the political agenda of the Third Awakening (i.e., twentieth century liberalism) was informed by what Fogel calls "modern egalitarianism"—the belief in "equality of condition."

In recent decades, however, the redistributionist ethic of liberalism has declined in public acceptance. Why? Largely, Fogel argues, because of its success, i.e., because equality of condition has to a great degree been achieved. It may not look that way if we measure equality in money terms, since in America we still have vast disparities of income and wealth. However, Fogel points out, nowadays ordinary Americans have a purchasing power that only the wealthy possessed a century ago; we still have relative deprivation, true, but almost no absolute poverty. Just as important, and perhaps even more so, thanks to improved diet and medicine, we live longer, we live more healthily, and we have more energy to devote to work and play. A small percentage of the populace still lags behind, of course, and that needs to be worked on. But

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS, EDITOR

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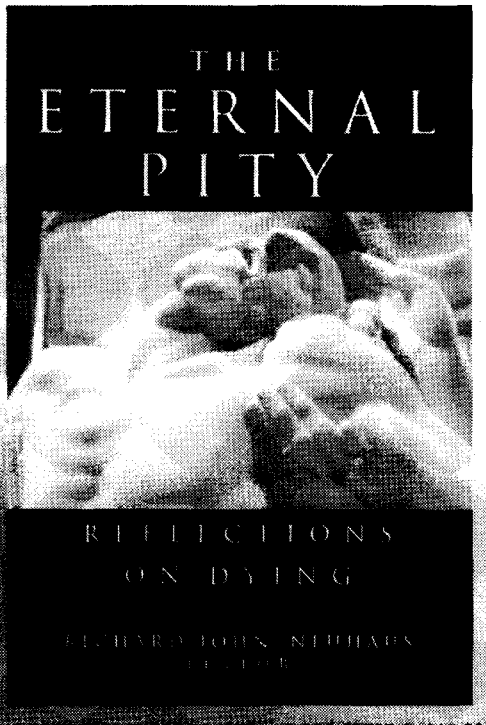

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most of us have just about everything we really need in terms of material and biological goods.

Virtual material satiety now leaves us free to work on our "spiritual" needs. A combination of great prosperity plus longer and healthier life (both of which will continue to improve in the years ahead) means that a smaller fraction of one's lifetime will be devoted to the necessity of earning a living (Fogel calls this "earnwork"), while a greater fraction will be available for activity that is voluntary and spiritually fulfilling ("volwork"). But this shift doesn't mean that America will no longer have to worry about equality. Far from it. Only now we will have to be concerned with a new kind of equality: not equality of opportunity or equality of condition, but "equality of spiritual resources." This will be our "postmodern egalitarian agenda."

And what counts as a spiritual resource? Fogel gives us a list of fifteen resources, including such items as "sense of purpose," "vision of opportunity," "strong family ethic," "sense of community," "ethic of benevolence," "work ethic," "thirst for knowledge," and "self-esteem." This list is perhaps the weakest moment in the book. For one thing, it reads like a catalogue that might have been borrowed from a self-help column in a magazine found at the supermarket. For another, it's arbitrary. Fogel doesn't attempt to demonstrate why it should be *this* list and not some other. Why not faith, hope, and charity? Why not poverty, chastity, and obedience? Why not the four cardinal virtues of ancient moral philosophy—prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance? Why not Aristotle's more ample list of virtues, including philosophical wisdom? Why not Thomas Aquinas' list, which blends Christian and Aristotelian virtues? At first glance, any of these other lists would seem to be more eligible than Fogel's, since each has something Fogel's does not, namely, a track record of producing spiritual virtuosi.

FURTHER, this list is hardly consistent with Fogel's thesis that the bearers of the Fourth Awakening are mainly conservative Protestants. Evangelicals and Pentecostals, were they to draw up a list of essential spiritual resources, would include some of the items on Fogel's list, but not others—e.g., when did "self-esteem" become a Christian virtue? More importantly, Fogel's list omits items that would certainly be on a conservative Protestant list, e.g., love of God, faith in Jesus Christ, diligent study of the Bible.

The book is written for the general reader, not the specialist alone. Fogel's knowledge of economic history is immense, and one of the incidental pleasures of the book is the information about economic history it liberally scatters through its pages. At moments, however, I felt that the train of argument would have been clearer if the supply of information had been less. But my real complaint is that all this data is put in the service of such a tepid thesis. All these big and contested issues are brought to bear to allow us to predict . . . that in the future people will try to help themselves and help others to help themselves become nicer, psychologically healthier people. This is awakening from materialism, perhaps. But hardly something Great.

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A Texian-Constantinopolitan Bioethic

THE FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN BIOETHICS. By H. TRISTRAM ENGELHARDT, Jr. *Swets & Zeitlinger. 397 pp. $39.95.*

Reviewed by **Gilbert Meilaender**

IN 1986 H. Tristram Engelhardt published his widely read book, *The Foundations of Bioethics.* A second edition followed in 1996. Both editions carried the stamp of Engelhardt's proudly displayed "Texian" (as in the "Republic of Texas") commitment to liberty and his contention that in a society such as ours citizens meet as "moral strangers" sharing no common moral vision. Acknowledging the reality of pluralism, they must therefore accept the fact that their shared public morality must be minimal and largely procedural.

Between those two editions, however, came Engelhardt's conversion and

GILBERT MEILAENDER *holds the Phyllis and Richard Duesenberg Chair in Christian Ethics at Valparaiso University.*

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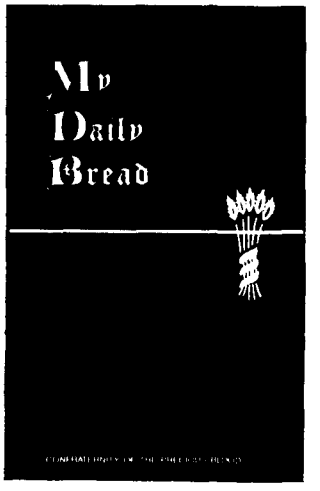

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baptism into Orthodox Christianity—or, as he puts it, that faith "which unites in true worship and belief the Patriarch of Antioch, the Archbishop of Athens and of all Greece, the Patriarch of Moscow, the Catholicos of Georgia, the Pope of Alexandria and all Africa, and the Metropolitan of Washington." For shorthand, we may follow him in calling this simply the Christianity of the first millennium, or traditional Christianity. Engelhardt notes that even in the second edition of *The Foundations of Bioethics*, having developed "the sparse fabric of the secular morality available to bind moral strangers," he had written: "If one wants more than secular reason can disclose—and one should want more—then one should join a religion and be careful to choose the right one."

That he believes himself now to have done and, hence, finds himself in this new book able to offer "the thick morality of moral friends," though without supposing that this distinctively Christian morality could be adopted by the larger society. The book is, I think, too long and too repetitive. It devotes a surprisingly large percentage of its pages to disputes about method, when one would have thought Engelhardt's task now was to unfold in its fulness the Christian vision of bioethics. The book's combination of Texian commitment to freedom with Christian commitment to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan faith may puzzle readers and may not always seem to work. Its decidedly (and, I have to say, enjoyably) *non*-ecumenical approach to other strands of Christian thought sometimes threatens to lose shared vision in order to emphasize divergences. Nonetheless, none of these problematic features can detract from the fact that readers will meet here a powerful mind—deeply grounded in the literature of bioethics, in modern philosophy, and in many Christian thinkers of that first millennium—along with a passionate and argumentative spirit.

A BRIEF SUMMARY cannot do justice to the book's richness, but the basic structure of argument is approximately as follows: roughly a millennium of a largely undivided Christendom was fractured by a split between East and West and, then, by the Reformation. Pluralism resulted, and Enlightenment thinkers sought to provide a new ethic that, while secular, would still be universal in scope. Now, though, the advent of "postmodernism" has made clear that (as Alasdair MacIntyre put it) the "Enlightenment project" has failed to provide any agreed-upon, content-full morality. Proponents of a universal (but secular) ethic often tell a story in which it was the fracturing of Christendom and the resulting religious warfare that forced nations to accept pluralism and to seek a secular ethic that could transcend the bloodshed caused by warring Christian factions. But, as Engelhardt is quick to point out, that is hardly the end of the story. Enlightenment ethics turned out to bring its own bloodshed (through the French and the Soviet revolutions), and "secular moralities were involved in more carnage in absolute terms than had ever been experienced in religious Western Europe."

Hence the irony: just when bioethics appears to have gained great success, becoming an accepted discipline, we begin to see clearly its inadequacies. It cannot really ground a "content-full," a more than procedural, shared public ethic. Our purportedly cosmopolitan world endorses what it calls diversity; yet it finds any real differences of belief to be threatening. Anyone who offers an approach to bioethics that is peculiarly Christian will be thought to be divisive and disqualified from participation in the search for a shared public consensus. In response, much that passes for Christian bioethics tries to rid itself of particularity, of the sharp edges given by traditional belief. In thus attempting to gain admittance to public discussion it becomes harmless and irrelevant—scarcely different from secular bioethics save for its "spiritual" atmosphere.

How traditional Christians thinking about bioethics ought to respond

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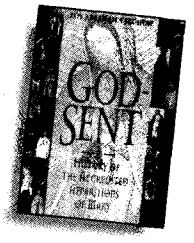

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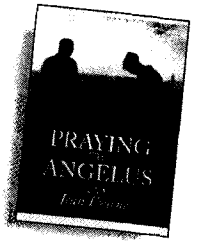

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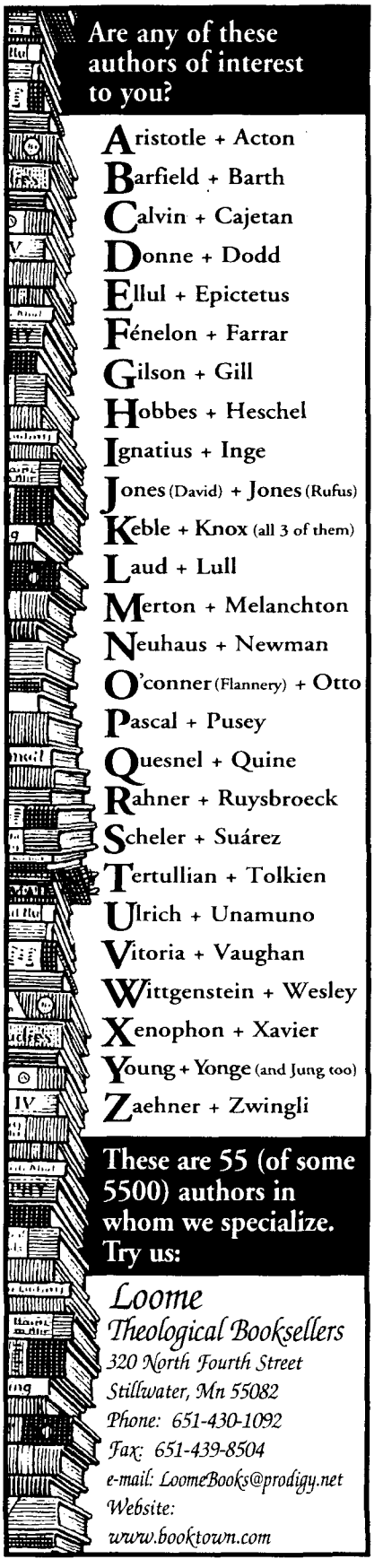
to this situation is not clear, however. There are moments when Engelhardt recognizes a kind of common Christian witness that might be shared by many believers of different denominational affiliations. He notes, for example, the fracturing of (especially) Protestant church bodies, with the result that "Christians at the traditional or liberal poles of the spectrum, respectively, frequently find that they share more with others at the same pole than they do with their coreligionists." This might suggest possibilities for a more robustly Christian bioethics that would be grounded in shared Christian belief. Engelhardt's more common move, however, is non-ecumenical. A useful bioethics that can provide real guidance must be developed from within—and that means not simply from within the boundaries of Christian faith generally, but within the more sectarian terms of particular Christian communions. For that reason a good bit of his polemic is directed not against secularists but against other Christians—in particular, against Rome.

In his view, "traditional Christians" (i.e., those who adhere to the Christianity of the first millennium, which Engelhardt identifies with present-day Orthodoxy) "will recognize other Christian groups as struggling to be fully Christian," but will see these other groups as "one-sided and distorted." Because the Church is one, other Christian views are bound to fall short unless they are restored to the fulness of Orthodox vision. "The Church may once have had two lungs, but one developed cancer." As opposed, for instance, to Roman Catholic attempts to instruct and transform the culture by means of argument grounded in shared rational capacities and discursive reasoning, traditional Christians should recognize our society as neopagan—a society in which "traditional Christians will survive as Orthodox Jews and Orthodox Christians have known to survive over the ages."

Methodologically, this approach turns out to cohere very nicely—perhaps a little too neatly—with Engelhardt's Texian passion for political liberty. With appeals to revelation impossible because of the fracturing of Christendom and appeals to reason impossible because of the failure of the Enlightenment project, any shared public morality cannot be substantive or "content-full." It will be merely procedural. The only source of shared authority remaining is agreement or consent. Free fellow citizens can be mutually bound only insofar as they can reach agreement, and their public life will perforce have to accommodate, as much as possible, differing visions of the good. Thus, "by default," a secular bioethics will be a libertarian bioethics, grounded in nothing other than the authority of consenting individuals. Thankfully, however, when taken seriously, such a libertarian bioethics, though not itself Christian, "makes space for such an ethic" (as well as for other moralities grounded in other particular ways of life). It is not always taken seriously, however, and Engelhardt has several pages of devastatingly incisive criticism of the way in which the views of John Rawls, for example, are heavily value-laden and "neutral" only in "the very special sense of not deviating from the background moral commitments of the dominant culture."

Engelhardt labels Rawls' approach "liberal cosmpolitanism," which is to be contrasted with Engelhardt's own "libertarian cosmopolitanism." The latter is cosmopolitan in the sense that it provides a way for all citizens to live together without force. It accomplishes this precisely by having no universally established and shared vision of the morally good life. Its authority is drawn solely from the permission of those who live together.



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Engelhardt explicitly recognizes that this alone is not enough to make life full—or, perhaps, even endurable. Hence, within that larger society libertarian cosmopolitans will need and will form smaller, thicker communities in which they encounter others not just as strangers but as moral friends.

But there is also a "liberal cosmopolitanism" that grows out of our need for deeper communal ties than the old Republic of Texas could provide. Those who lack any transcendent good to give value to their lives may come to value simply their lives! They give moral primacy to the good of self-expression. Hence, Engelhardt argues, a liberal cosmopolitan does, in fact, provide a substantive ranking of moral goods and a content-full vision of the morally good life. That vision gives pride of place to autonomous choice and supposes that all people should do so. It is, therefore, implicitly imperialistic in a way that libertarian cosmopolitanism is not. "Liberal cosmopolitanism is not cosmopolitan in being open to all as they reach out in their own terms to collaborate with moral strangers. . . . It is rather cosmopolitan in the robust sense of aspiring to be the global morality that should bind persons as they shed their particular bonds."

This is a powerful argument, and the distinction between the two forms of cosmopolitanism is illuminating. One may suspect, however, that no community can hold together without a deeper, shared sense of the morally good life than Engelhardt's position seems to allow. That is, the split between politics and ethics in his system may finally go deeper than is possible. It is, for example, a little hard to see how Engelhardt's traditional Christians could share willingly in a polity that allows countless of their fellow citizens to be aborted. Nevertheless, he needs to be taken seriously here both by Christians who want to shape a shared, public consensus and by secularists who are, in fact, far more imperialistic than they suppose themselves to be.

A PUZZLING FEATURE of this book is that Engelhardt devotes far more space to method, to the argument for the possibility of a Christian bioethic, than to its substantive development. Still, chapters five and six do discuss at considerable length questions that arise at the beginning of life (contraception, reproductive technologies, sterilization, cloning, and abortion) and at the end of life (suicide, euthanasia, and organ transplantation). Anyone can learn a great deal from reading and reflecting upon these chapters, and I do not wish to detract in any way from their value if I note here a few elements of the author's argument that seem problematic.

Engelhardt emphasizes repeatedly that the substantive Christian bioethic he is developing is "therapeutic" rather than "juridical." This is, one gathers, supposed to distinguish an Orthodox Catholic ethic from a Roman Catholic ethic. That there is something to such a distinction I would scarcely deny; nonetheless, it needs far more clarifying than Engelhardt provides. It often seems that ethics is being reduced to pastoral care, and Engelhardt can end up sounding surprisingly like contemporary Protestants of a Niebuhrian stripe, who bewail the human condition, wring their hands, and then do the terrible deed. Thus, for example, Engelhardt writes that "if, when faced with a choice between the life of the mother versus the life of the child *in utero*, one chooses to abort the child, then one must sincerely mourn this circumstance and truly repent. One must also seek spiritual guidance and attempt to involve no one who would be excommunicated through participation (i.e., any Orthodox)."

This is less than satisfying in a number of ways. Engelhardt rejects any attempt to distinguish cases (as Roman Catholic moral theology has done) through categories such as "direct" or "indirect" abortion. To do that would, presumably, be to lapse into a juridical ethic. Yet, if it is true, as he writes, that "often no matter what we do, we will be involved in

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sin," he needs to help us see why this abortion can be tolerated (though only with tears) but other abortions may not be tolerated at all. He needs to help us see why other Orthodox believers involved in the act could not also participate with tears and sincere mourning. There is a genuine distinction between the kind of guidance provided by the Church's ethical teaching and the kind of counsel provided by the Church's pastoral care. By failing to make such a distinction, Engelhardt's "therapeutic" bioethics threatens to make place for what we may, paraphrasing Paul Ramsey, term "ample abortions, always with tears."

Engelhardt is also a little too ready simply to report what the early Fathers taught without exploring the inner rationale of their teaching. I do not mean to underestimate the importance of confronting contemporary Christians with the authority of the Church's teaching, nor do the faithful always need to understand in order to accept. Still, faith can—with patience and humility—seek understanding. Thus, for example, in a generally very useful discussion of suicide, Engelhardt notes that several of the Fathers held that taking one's life in order to avoid a violation of one's chastity was permissible. I rather think, though, that they were mistaken in this—and that we need not follow them in this mistake. Similarly, we need not adopt the strict Augustinian rejection of any lying in order to think that Engelhardt (in a discussion of therapeutic deception by physicians) is too ready to allow (on the authority of St. John Cassian and Abba Dorotheos of Gaza) that lying may often be permitted, even obligatory, though "this must be mournfully followed by repentance." His discussion here regularly blurs the distinction between intention and motive, and the argument that deception is allowable when "lodged within a moral framework directed to the ultimate cure: salvation" needs precisely more argument if it is to be persuasive.

There is far more here than I have been able to touch upon, and other readers will find other grounds for agreement and disagreement. Engelhardt is likely to welcome especially the latter, and I should note, in closing, that this is a book which—though deliberately dogmatic in ways designed to offend a society in which all opinions are permitted but no opinion can be judged wrong—is written with a kind of zest and good humor that deserves to be enjoyed.

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BRIEFLY NOTED

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH: THE LEARNED MUSICIAN. By CHRISTOPH WOLFF. *Norton. 599 pp. $39.95.*

Great books do not require long reviews. If the book's so great, why waste time reading the review? That being so, this review of Christoph Wolff's new biography of Johann Sebastian Bach is already too long. Wolff has devoted most of his scholarly and performing life to Bach and his music. He is now Dean of Harvard's Graduate School and somehow in his spare time has produced here what is certainly the best biography of Bach I know of and what may be the most elegantly written biography of a composer ever produced (and English isn't even Professor Wolff's first language). The subtitle is taken from the letter of dismissal written by Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen in April of 1723. Bach had been employed by the prince (who held him in high regard) since 1717 and was leaving to accept an appointment in Leipzig. The prince called Bach "well learned," a testament not only to his skill as a musician but also to his highly trained and wide-ranging intellect. And although Wolff is careful to point out that Bach's work is too multifaceted to be described from only one viewpoint, the portrait of the composer Wolff sketches is of a musical scholar who produced works of "musical science." As a science, his music imitated nature (and thus purposefully referred to God who created nature). It is within this context that we are to understand Bach's own view that the "ultimate end of or final goal [of true music is] the honor of God and the recreation of the soul." I have but one serious complaint about the book (other than that I wish it were even longer). In discussing what Bach saw as the purpose for his art, Wolff concludes that "Bach's compositions . . . may epitomize nothing less than the difficult task of finding for himself an argument for the existence of God—perhaps the ultimate goal of his musical science." I may be wrong here, but I don't think that Bach fretted himself a moment over the existence of God. That might have been the fashion up in Berlin or over in Paris, but not in Leipzig, or at least not in the cantor's house. What I find again and again in Bach's work are meditations on Jesus, which is something of a different matter. In any case, Wolff has produced a marvelous book that will benefit the professional musician and delight the music lover. A hundred and twenty years ago, Philipp Spitta produced the first comprehensive biography of Bach, a work that despite its many errors has remained in print as a model of Bach research. I predict an equally long shelf life for Prof. Wolff's book.

— Michael Linton

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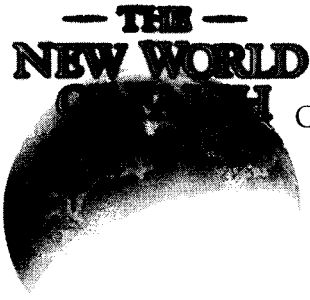

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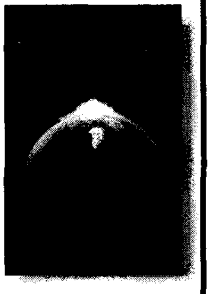

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A HISTORY OF CELIBACY: FROM ATHENA TO ELIZABETH I, LEONARDO DA VINCI, FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE, GHANDI, AND CHER. By ELIZABETH ABBOTT. *Scribner. 493 pp. $30.*

Most people today simply assume that the celebrated figures of our past had some illicit affair or perversity hiding in their closet. Great men, as we were told so often during the Lewinsky fiasco, have great passions. Into this milieu steps University of Toronto professor Elizabeth Abbott with *A History of Celibacy*, an exposé on people who *didn't* have sex. It was a surprise bestseller in Canada last year—it seems today that kink is de rigueur and not having sex is, well, sexy. Yet though it wears the garb of serious scholarship, *A History of Celibacy* is really no

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less shallow than the Sally Hemmings movies, amounting to little more than gossip about those who abstain, for whatever reason: the angelic-voiced castrati of Italian opera; Greek goddesses Athena and Hestia; basketball star-turned-HIV-carrying-AIDS-activist Magic Johnson; the gaunt, desert-wandering ascetics of Eastern Christianity; boxers conserving energy for the big fight; nineteenth-century British proto-feminists; the poet Ovid, who described himself as "limp as yesterday's lettuce"; the spirit-moved, fitful dancing Shakers; and doleful Hindus, widowed for life before they were able to marry. "Celibacy or chastity," Abbott writes, "is abstaining from sexual relations, intentionally or under duress, temporarily or for indefinite periods." If being celibate doesn't depend on whether one wants to abstain, or for how long one abstains, then who doesn't qualify? In trying to create a category large enough to contain all the cases in her study, she makes it too broad to be stable. Her definition evaporates in its generality, becoming meaningless. It knows no bounds, and neither does the book.

— *Spencer Lewerenz*

Seeing Salvation: Images of Christ in Art. By Neil MacGregor. *Yale University Press. 238 pp. $35.*

Images of Christ in iconography, sculpture, and painting from the early centuries—and one wishes one could say up to the present. There is, however, little here beyond the sixteenth century and only one image from the twentieth. That, however, is not entirely the fault of MacGregor, since there is relatively little from the last three hundred years deserving of inclusion in the great tradition he presents, along with learned and engaging commentary. A book for the coffee table that will invite many return visits.

Not Ashamed: The Story of Jews for Jesus. By Ruth A. Tucker. *Multnomah. 310 pp. $12.99 paper.*

Twenty-five years after Moishe Rosen launched Jews for Jesus, it continues to flourish as one of the most promising, provocative, offensive, outrageous (depending on whom you ask) developments in Jewish-Christian relations. The dominant, perhaps unanimous, view of Jewish leaders is that Jews for Jesus is fraudulent, exploitative, and, at least implicitly, anti-Semitic. A common, if not dominant, view among Christians is expressed by J. I. Packer in his foreword to the present book: "Paul's 'to

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the Jew first' (Romans 1:16) remains a pointer to a permanent priority in Christian evangelism. For many centuries the Church lost sight of it, and some moderns have argued that Jews need not be evangelized at all, but Jews for Jesus is what it sounds like—Jewish Christians sharing their faith with other Jews—and we should thank God that they are there doing that." Wherever one comes down on these questions, Ms. Tucker has provided a very readable account of the movement and its founder, and the book must be reckoned a valuable contribution to the conflicted history of Judaism and the Christian movement to which it gave birth.

JUDGING JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES. By SHAWN FRANCIS PETERS. *University of Kansas Press. 342 pp. $34.95.*

A vivid telling of the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in the U.S., especially during World War II, and the religious freedom jurisprudence sparked by the frequently courageous witness of the Witnesses. An important story, although one might wish the author were more critical of the liberal-individualistic skewing of religion in the court decisions he celebrates.

THE ESSENTIAL CIVIL SOCIETY READER: THE CLASSIC ESSAYS. Edited by DON E. EBERLY. *Rowman & Littlefield. 414 pp. $22.95 paper.*

The book delivers on its title and will be warmly welcomed by those who want to get on top of the still-growing discussion of civil society. Among those who have shaped the discussion and are included here: Robert Bellah, Peter Berger, John J. DiIulio, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Mary Ann Glendon, Richard John Neuhaus, Robert Nisbet, Michael Sandel, and James Q. Wilson.

FADED MOSAIC: THE EMERGENCE OF POST-CULTURAL AMERICA. By CHRISTOPHER CLAUSEN. *Ivan R. Dee. 209 pp. $25.*

However many sides there are in the culture wars, they are all wrong. The sobering fact, says the author, is that culture—whether understood as a monoculture or as multiculturalism—has disappeared in America. There are only individuals consuming bits of cultural nostalgia or cultural experimentation according to individual taste. Commanding and informing traditions are dead, although Clausen leaves room for hope that something quite unexpected may take their place. The bracing argument is, as with most bracing arguments, overstated. It is also intelligently provocative.

GOD AND GLOBALIZATION: RELIGION AND THE POWERS OF THE COMMON LIFE. Edited by MAX L. STACKHOUSE and PETER J. PARIS. *Trinity. 304 pp. $40.*

Issuing from a conference at the Center of Theological Inquiry at Princeton, this is the first volume in a series that tries to unpack the many meanings of "globalization" and demonstrate the increasing urgency of tempering its economic dynamic by the intelligent assertion of moral and religious truths.

THE AMERICAN PARADOX: SPIRITUAL HUNGER IN AN AGE OF PLENTY. By DAVID G. MYERS. *Yale University Press. 412 pp. $29.95.*

A comprehensive survey of "communitarian" initiatives in thought and public policy. The author, professor of psychology at Hope College, Michigan, proposes a hopeful reading of a culture that is turning away from the obsession with individual rights and toward an appreciation of life ordered by tradition and community.

FLUDD. By HILARY MANTEL. *Henry Holt. 181 pp. $13 paper.*

Ms. Mantel, an English writer with eight novels on her record, is too

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young to have known firsthand the bad old "pre-Vatican II Church," but she rummages with juvenile zest through the warehouse of tattered stereotypes to cobble together what she presents as a comical tale of a curmudgeonly old priest who has the saving merit of not believing in God as he caters to the risible superstitions of his piously pagan Irish parishioners. A curious fellow by the name of Fludd shows up, pretending to be the new curate sent by the fatuously tyrannical bishop who is determined that the parish of St. Thomas Aquinas be jolted into the modern age. Fludd turns out, however, to be an angel of sorts who deflowers the sexually repressed Sister Philemon, rescuing her from the regime of Mother Perpetua, a vicious shrew who gets her kicks by belaboring ignorant school children with a heavy cane. There is also a lot about statues that don't answer prayers, faked stigmata, and the absurd casuistries of the confessional. The result is a portrayal of Catholicism, old and new, as a system of guilt-ridden credulity and hypocrisy that is easily cured by a healthy romp between the sheets. There are probably caricatures and clichés that Ms. Mantel does not enlist in this sniggeringly unimaginative send-up, but they do not readily come to mind.

To Kill the Pope: An Ecclesiastical Thriller. By Tad Szulc. *Scribner. 312 pp. $25.*

Szulc, who wrote a biography of the Pope, writes in this novel's afterword that "the truth about the investigation and assassination attempt against John Paul II is disclosed here for the first time." The truth, he claims without supplying an iota of evidence, is that a Lefebvrist-type French archbishop ordered the assassination and enlisted the help of Muslim "fundamentalists" in carrying it out. All this is discovered through the derring-do of a young American Jesuit who reports to a pretty nun who works for the Pope's sinister secretary. Having solved the mystery of the attempted assassination, the priest and nun are appalled by power politics in the Church, fall in love, abandon their vows, and run off together, presumably to get married. *To Kill the Pope*: soon to be turned into a cartoon strip.

Religion and the New Republic. Edited by James H. Hutson. *Rowman & Littlefield. 212 pp. $70 cloth, $24.95 paper.*

Papers by, inter alia, John Witte, Michael Novak, and Mark Noll prepared in connection with the marvelous Library of Congress exhibit on religion in the American founding.

What's Left? Liberal American Catholics. Edited by Mary Jo Weaver. *Indiana University Press. 304 pp. $39.95 paper.*

Conservatives are distressed by change, writes editor Weaver, while liberals "can accept a God and a world in process and in partnership. . . . [They] recognize that order and chaos are not enemies; they are partners in the creative enterprise." The book is a useful catalog of liberal/left enthusiasms and alarums, concluding with historian David O'Brien's incontrovertible observation that "The story of American Catholicism is not yet finished. The next chapter remains to be written."

Clark H. Pinnock: Journey Toward Renewal. By Barry L. Callen. *Evangel. 298 pp. $18.95 paper.*

Pinnock is an evangelical Protestant theologian to whom the adjective "controversial" has been attached for almost thirty years. Callen sympathetically tracks his movement from Calvinism (Pinnock calls it "paleo-Calvinism") to an Arminian accent on free will in both God and man. The book is a valuable assist in understanding some of the more turbulent theological churnings in contemporary evangelicalism.

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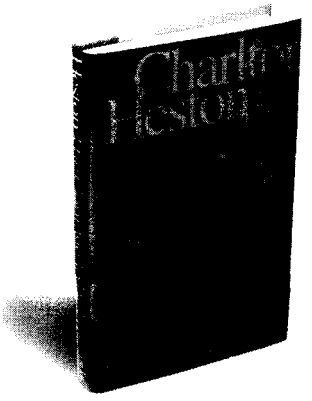

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PAUL: A NOVEL. By WALTER WANGERIN. *Zondervan. 510 pp. $44.99 cloth, $18.99 paper.*

A strange and rewarding book. The apostle Paul speaks only in the words of his New Testament letters, while all around him are the voices of disciples, Roman officials, and others caught up in this new thing called Christian. Wangerin, a Lutheran and prolific author, has a knack for conveying the sense of puzzlement, excitement, and wonder that must have attended the early years of the Church.

TRINITY, TIME, AND CHURCH: A RESPONSE TO THE THEOLOGY OF ROBERT W. JENSON. Edited by COLIN E. GUNTON. *Eerdmans. 331 pp. $38.*

Robert Jenson is no stranger to the readers of this journal. Over almost forty years, this Lutheran deeply formed by Barthian, Catholic, and Orthodox theology has made consistently suggestive, sometimes provocative, and always lively contributions to Christian thought, and has done so on an astonishing range of subjects, most centrally those specified in the title. To know Jenson's work is to know most of what needs to be known about contemporary theology. Among the twenty-one contributors to the volume are David Novak, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Carl Braaten, Robert Louis Wilken, Susan K. Wood, Richard John Neuhaus, Stanley Hauerwas, and Gilbert Meilaender.

CHAMPION OF WOMEN AND THE UNBORN: HORATIO ROBINSON STORER, M.D. By FREDERICK N. DYER. *Science History Publications. 614 pp. $39.95.*

Largely forgotten today is the fact that it was the medical profession that in the nineteenth century rallied public sentiment and led in establishing the laws protecting unborn children that were negated by *Roe v. Wade.* Dr. Horatio Robinson Storer (1830-1922) was one of the key leaders in that campaign, and this is a detailed account of his life and influence. An appendix includes a letter written by the socialist leader Norman Thomas on the stationery of the *Nation*, consoling Storer's daughter and congratulating her on "the noble heritage your father left, not only to his family but to mankind." A reminder that protecting women and children from abortion and abortionists was once embraced as a progressive cause—which it surely is.

THE BEST CHRISTIAN WRITING 2000. Edited by JOHN WILSON. *HarperSanFrancisco. 340 pp. $15 paper.*

There is an element of arbitrariness in selecting "the best" of anything, but this is a very credible collection of twenty-seven essays on a wide range of subjects from a wide range of perspectives. Included are three FT essays, Robert Royal on Columbus and the New World, Jean Bethke Elshtain on Abraham Lincoln, and Richard John Neuhaus on the idea of moral progress.

Shakespearean Variation 87

Farewell! Thou art too dear for my possessing.
Shock shook me when I read the estimate
Of payment for your ultimate releasing
From the mechanics' clutches at a date determinate.
You were a good old car. I'm granting
That, of my loyalty more than deserving,
Despite the many things in which you're wanting.
Item. Your unnerving habit of sudden swerving;
Your cloudy glass and dented fenders; no knowing
From your gauge amount of fuel, mistaking
Empty for half full. Your faults are growing.
Item. The black smoke you're always making.
Exhausted car, your tires could not be flatter;
You're graveyard bound, but so am I. What matter?

Ralph McInerny

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

To Say Jesus Is Lord

Yes, much of the misunderstanding was willful. But the fact is that the media coverage of the declaration *Dominus Iesus* (The Lord Jesus), issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in September, was almost uniformly negative, as was the reaction of the several communities engaged in ecumenical dialogue with the Catholic Church. It was alleged that Rome is now saying, among other things, that only Catholics can be saved and that non-Catholics are, at best, second-rate Christians. That is emphatically not true. *Dominus Iesus* is nothing more than a clear restatement of long-established Catholic teaching, and I agree with every word of it. But one may be forgiven for thinking it is missing other words that might have avoided misunderstandings and would have made it more difficult for those bent on misrepresenting Catholic teaching.

In response to the pervasive relativism in contemporary culture, and the form of relativism that is called religious syncretism in the dialogue between religions—a problem that came in for special attention at a recent Synod for Asia—CDF, with the Pope's express support, is reiterating the Church's faith that Jesus is, as he said of himself, the way, the truth, and the life. He is not one way among other ways or one truth among other truths. He is Lord of all or he is lord not at all. God denies no one grace sufficient to be saved, but whoever is saved is saved because of the redemption effected through Jesus Christ, whether or not they have ever heard of Jesus Christ. Because there is only one God and one revelation of God in Jesus Christ, who is true man and true God, there can be, as the declaration puts it, "only one economy of salvation."

This argument, and the missionary imperative inherent in the argument, is set forth at greater length and, one may be permitted to suggest, with greater felicity in the 1990 encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (The Mission of the Redeemer). The ecclesiological dimension of the argument, which necessarily engages ecumenism, is marvelously expressed in the 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (That They May Be One). The claim that the Church of Jesus Christ "subsists in"—is most fully and rightly ordered in—the Catholic Church is a presupposition of Catholic engagement with other Christians who are "truly but imperfectly" in communion with the Catholic Church. As I say, the new declaration says nothing that is not said in other magisterial documents, particularly in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, and it is always necessary to restate these important truths.

It should not be thought that the response to *Dominus Iesus* by non-Catholics has been uniformly negative. Dr. Timothy George is Dean of Beeson Divinity School and a very influential evangelical Protestant theologian. He is also executive editor of *Christianity Today* and a key participant in the project "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." He had this to say about the declaration:

"As an evangelical theologian committed to Christian unity, I welcome this new statement as an encouragement to the kind of ecumenism we ought to be engaged in. In some ecumenical circles, the barometer of conviction has fallen so low that it no longer registers the temperature of truth. In the Evangelicals and Catholics Together movement, both sides are equally committed to an ecumenism of conviction, not an ecumenism of accommodation. We do no service to the cause of Christ by smudging the serious theological differences that still divide our two traditions. From an evangelical perspective, we must say to the Church of Rome the same thing that this documents says to non-Catholic Christians:

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serious defects remain in Catholic teaching and piety and we call the Church of Rome, as we call our own churches, to further reformation on the basis of the Word of God.

"Seventy-five years ago evangelical leader J. Gresham Machen observed that Bible-believing Protestants and faithful Roman Catholics shared more in common with one another than they did with others who denied the deity of Christ, the miracles of Jesus, the Holy Trinity, or the second coming of Christ. That is still true today and we must continue to work for greater mutual understanding on the basis of a shared commitment to the core of orthodox Christian belief. Evangelicals who care about the gospel should welcome the Vatican's spurning of religious relativism and its reassertion that Jesus Christ is the one and only Redeemer for all peoples everywhere.

"We certainly do not agree on the role of the papacy and this remains a barrier to full Christian unity as Pope John Paul II himself has acknowledged. But evangelicals believe that God is able to work in, with, and under faulty church structures to bring lost men and women into a personal, saving relationship with Jesus Christ. While only God can read anyone's hearts, I dare to say that there are countless Roman Catholics who know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, just as there are no doubt (in my denomination) many Southern Baptists who have been duly dunked but are still spiritually dead. There is no place for either Catholic-baiting or Baptist-bashing among true believers in Jesus."

The message of *Dominus Iesus* is that to say that Jesus is Lord is necessarily to say that no one else and nothing else is lord. This has been and always will be "controversial," and is thought outrageously offensive in a culture whose highest truth is tolerance, with tolerance understood to mean that all truths are equal, which is another way of saying there is no truth. In ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, as also in encounters with those of no religion, all participants are of equal human dignity but their beliefs are not equally true. If our different understandings of the truth made no difference, there would be no point in dialogue. In the sometimes difficult hours of interviews and conversations I have had about *Dominus Iesus*, there have been glimmers of hope that more people are coming to recognize the crucial distinction between tolerance and truth, and even that tolerance is most securely grounded in the truth that we are all made in the image of the one God who, Christians claim, has revealed Himself in Jesus the Lord, who alone is true God and true man. If the declaration contributes to more people arriving at that understanding, then I suppose it will achieve what the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had in mind.

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FROM THE NORTHERN FRONT

Allumette Island, Quebec. August 2000—I admit it, I have cheated this year. The *National Post* made me do it. And, to a lesser extent, the *Ottawa Citizen*, where my friend Raymond de Souza, a seminarian at the North American College in Rome, is reporting on the magnificent World Youth Day being held there. As regular readers know, the time at the family cottage here in Quebec is also a vacation from newspapers. Instead of breakfast with the insufferable *New York Times*, each day over coffee I read and reread the venerable eleventh edition of the *Britannica*. I am doing that this year, too, but I confess that I have also been driving four miles to the crossroads store at Demers Centre, just south of Chapeau (which, with a population of about two hundred, is the metropolitan center of L'ile aux Allumettes) to pick up the papers.

Except for the occasional PBS documentary on "Our Neighbors to the North," and maybe for that as well, most Americans evidence a nearly imperturbable indifference to what is happening in Canada. On behalf of our Canadian subscribers, I resent that. And on my own behalf, too, for I continue to be very fond of the Ottawa Valley where I was born and reared. It is not just my personal predilection, however, that makes me think attention should be paid. Things of interest sometimes happen in Canada. There is, for instance, the Alliance Party, which is uniting conservatives under the leadership of Stockwell Day. Alliance is now the official opposition and bids fair to turn out the Liberals in elections within the coming year. Day is an impressive leader, which is what I am inclined to say about any politician who is given to quoting me favorably on the role of religion and moral judgment in public life. With the stunning victory of Vicente Fox as president of Mexico, the possibility of Bush's election in the U.S., and the prospect of Day as Prime Minister of Canada, the politics of North America could very soon look very different. Yes, I know, and I cite it all the time: "Put not your trust in princes" (Psalm 146). Yet some princes provide more reason for tempered hope than others.

Admittedly, some things of interest that happen in

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Canada are not so promising. Frequently they are downright crazy. The Canadian version of political correctness under the long-running Liberal regime makes the thought police in the U.S. appear libertarian by comparison. For example, the Canadian government seems bent on bankrupting the churches of the country. The churches of Canada are mainly Catholic, Anglican, and United, the last being a 1920s merger of Methodists, Congregationalists, and most Presbyterians. In the early twentieth century, the government set up Indian schools on reservations and asked the churches to run them, which they did. Policy changes with the winds of fashion, and now the First Nations, as native Canadians are called, are driving home the truth that no good deed goes unpunished.

Of course, there were bad deeds, too, and some of the more than seven thousand lawsuits make the usual allegations about sexual and other abuses. But the great crime of which the churches are accused is "cultural genocide." Not only did they interfere with native religions, but they taught the kids English and generally did their best to prepare them for assimilation into the majority culture. Assimilation was then; First Nations Identity is now. The government has already acknowledged its culpability and has put a first installment of $350 million into a "healing fund" for the settlement of the law suits. The minister of Indian affairs has said that the churches must "feel some pain" in doing their share, which is likely to be a much larger sum in a final settlement or—even if the churches win at trial—in the cost of litigating the thousands of suits. The Anglicans have already announced drastic cuts in their national staff and are discussing selling off sundry properties or declaring bankruptcy. At its August convention, the United Church passed a resolution promising the Anglicans its prayers and solidarity in these difficult times, but then immediately rescinded the resolution at the insistence of delegates from bands (formerly called tribes) of First Nations. This may be the first time that a church officially withdrew a promise to pray for fellow Christians.

With a few exceptions, leaders of all three churches appear to be eagerly and predictably supine in confessing their genocidal sins. The United Church, whose politics lean sharply leftward, is demonstrating its good faith by demonstrating it has little faith in its clergy. They, along with other church staff, will be subjected to a criminal check by the police every three years in order to catch potential child abusers. This is the same church that is on record warning against the police state that Canada is supposedly becoming. As for a going-out-of-business sale, the *Post* has editorially reminded the leaders that the churches are not theirs to squander in a spasm of guilt concocted to improve their public image. Columnist David Frum adds, "If the church leaders have lost faith in the value of their churches' missions, it is their obligation to resign from their positions of leadership, not to cooperate in their churches' dissolution." He notes that the government can always tax in order to raise money, but, with demands for hundreds of millions of dollars, "the churches will be forced to liquidate." "There are precedents," he writes, "for such a massive forced sale of religious property in Russia, in Mexico, and in Spain. But nothing like it has occurred in an English-speaking country since Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries 500 years ago." (An English-speaking country? In Canada, that clearly shows Frum to be a hopeless right-winger.)

I rather doubt that the churches in Canada will go out of business. Especially with the Catholic Church, and to a lesser extent with the others, ownership of property is dispersed in a way that reduces legal liability. On the other hand, "terminal niceness" is a phrase that I am told was invented for Canadians. Maybe Prime Minister Stockwell Day will come to the rescue before the thousands of claims go to trial. If he cannot exorcise the nonsense of "cultural genocide," it can at least be recognized that the churches ran the native schools at the request of, and under contract with, the government. The policy may now be thought wrongheaded—and setting up residential schools that forcibly separated children from their families was certainly wrong—but it was from start to finish a government policy, and the government should ante up for what it declares to be its mistaken course.

So interesting things do happen in Canada. But now I see that writing this item has taken up a good part of the morning. That's what I get for reading the papers. I cannot promise not to do it again. But for now it's back to the eleventh *Britannica* and that thoughtful entry on why there is not a hint of the autobiographical in the perversely grand speeches that Milton gives Satan in *Paradise Lost*. And then a dip down at the point, or maybe we'll take the boat out, if the Ottawa River calms down a bit. (My godson Stephen Paul—son of George and Joan Weigel—is sure it's calm enough already. But I have learned that he's inclined to think circumstances ideal for whatever he wants to do at the moment.) And after that? Whatever. Whatever is what a cottage is for. As I'll tell myself tomorrow morning when resisting the lure of Demers Centre and news from the big world elsewhere.

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THE EXTREME OF EXCELLENCE

Nobody wants to be called an extremist, but there is undeniably something extreme about human excellence. That is the argument of a bracing new book by R. R. Reno and Brian S. Hook, *Heroism and the Christian Life: Reclaiming Excellence* (Westminster/John Knox, 249 pp., $23.95 paper). They trace the understanding of the heroic life from Homer to Virgil to the New Testament to Augustine to Milton to Bonhoeffer, and up to the present day in America—except, when we get to the present, we seem to have run out of heroes and heroines. Our unhappy circumstance is the result of, inter alia, our having learned too well Max Weber's lessons about "the disenchantment of the world." We have learned to be prudent, skeptical, and disinterested. "The only possible heroism is to resist the temptations of heroism," according to the authors. There are no intensities, and certainly nothing touched by the suspicion of being extreme. The culture described by Reno and Hook is very like the culture depicted in David Brooks' recent *Bobos in Paradise.*

The prevailing prudence and disinterest, say Reno and Hook, is better understood as "supine indolence." "Prudence triumphs over the risks of excellence, and this, we believe, more than anything else, undermines our capacity to see and admire the heroic, in ourselves or others. Parents urge their children to work hard in school, to fill their resumés with just the right sorts of activities, to get good job experience. But this advice has not a tinge of real ambition. We need to lay up a treasure of skills and credentials in order to protect ourselves against a dangerous world. The *labor et virtus* of our time—and surely we live in an age of intense self-discipline, long hours at work, and seemingly boundless activity—does not strive toward the founding of a new city. We compact our souls; we pour ourselves into jobs and projects—but with a defensive purpose. Our achievements are little more than an electric fence we erect around our egos, our families, and our retirements. We do not extend ourselves in the risks of ambition governed only by the lure of excellence and blind to the dangers of failure. The so-called risk takers—the entrepreneurs, the wealthy middle-aged professionals who try to climb Mount Everest, the artists who pose against the background of transgression—are nothing more than gamblers looking for a big payoff. They want to add to their personal account—their bank accounts and their ego accounts. They simply calculate in larger sums than most of us."

In such a world, intensities of talent or aspiration must be safely contained. "Prudence mounts constant assaults on our imprudent and often uncontrollable desire for excellence. For example, we worry about the fate of gifted children. Such a child should not 'feel' different from his or her peers. The concern is not to inculcate Christian humility, for that entails driving the gifted beyond the horizons of their surpassing abilities toward the vision of an achievement higher still. Rather, we worry about talented children because of our collective preoccupation with plain vanilla happiness. Precocious children must be properly socialized; they need to enjoy the playground. As they grow older, they need to feel comfortable in the pinched world of adolescent isolation. They need to fall under the sway of anxieties about fitting into their peer group, about whether or not they have the right clothes, the right car, and the right date for the prom. God forbid that a talented child miss out on normalcy; otherwise, she or he will never 'fit in.' If talented children are recognized, then they will feel the endless lash of expectation and ambition. Faced with Achilles' choice of returning to his family and enjoying the home and hearth, or the cold and isolating steel of battle, they might, like him, be unable to embrace mediocrity and its soft pleasures. Buffeted with anxieties about our own happiness and numbed by the comforts of postindustrial plenty, we think such a fate terrible. Better to encourage a 'normal childhood.'"

Dangerous Territory

The heroism of true discipleship is threatening. "The Virgin Mary seems a strange and disturbing figure because she signals dangerous territory where we fear our psyches cannot survive. The very idea of virginity is terrifying. It is so . . . *abnormal.* Could I really endure such renunciation? Could I survive being so different from ordinary folks? And toward what end? What are, thinks our calculating prudence, the compensations? But within the patterns of heroic discipleship, chastity is no more than the urgent physical center of any number of rings of risky renunciation: property, family, and communal loyalty. At every turn, the intense ambition of Christian discipleship challenges our sense of what is reasonable, humane, even possible. Abraham is not a threat to our reason or our freedom of self-expression. Most of us have little loyalty to argument and evidence; inconvenient facts and inferences are repressed. We have little confidence in our personal genius, and we are more concerned about 'finding our voice' than speaking

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our minds. Nor is Abraham a threat because he is obedient. We are largely followers rather than leaders, and prudence dictates conformity and submission most of the time. Rather, Abraham is terrible because his obedience is so singular, so extreme, so heroic."

There are, of course, dangers in the heroic life, especially the dangers of spiritual pride, but Reno and Hook insist that the antidote to pride cannot be the egalitarian piety or the cynicism that makes heroism appear as scandalously elitist or hopelessly naive. The alternative to both pride and mediocrity is provided in, for instance, Milton's treatment of Abraham's testing and Athanasius' telling of the trials of Anthony in the desert. "Athanasius wants us to marvel at Anthony and his achievements, and in order to fall victim to Athanasius' intentions, we must train and stretch our imaginations beyond the pinched confines of egalitarian piety and cynical suspicion, and we must certainly free our souls from the many chains of supine indolence. Spenser wishes to incite us toward an active faith that quests toward high goals, and in order to follow his poetic arguments, not just analytically but personally, we need to develop a living vocabulary of the heroic. At each point, these Christian writers have not renounced heroism. They have not rejected excellence. They have reclaimed heroism and excellence on behalf of the highest good."

Along the way, the authors offer suggestive analyses of how Albert Camus and Dietrich Bonhoeffer understood heroism. Bonhoeffer, they contend, associated the heroic ideal with Nazism and its leadership cult, setting against it the "antiheroism" of unqualified obedience to the Leader, Jesus Christ. He did not resist the Nazis; they resisted Christ. "They were active, Bonhoeffer was passive. He was made martyr; he did not choose or make himself a martyr. But of course, that is precisely the way in which the Christian tradition has understood that strange power that Paul thought to be the inheritance of the baptized. Not I, but Christ in me." I am not sure that Reno and Hook are right in their reading of *The Cost of Discipleship* and other Bonhoeffer texts. He understood human excellence, including the excellence of radical discipleship, but was relentless in attributing every excellence in the life of obedience to the One obeyed. This is not, I think, "antiheroism." It is heroism radically ordered to the One who calls us to, and equips us for, martyrdom. But that is an argument for another day. Enough for now to warmly recommend *Heroism and the Christian Life.* Not because I am in complete agreement with the argument, but because it is a bracing corrective to the false virtue of mediocrity so pervasive in our society, and not least in our churches.

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CONTRACT, COVENANT, AND THE BEGINNING OF "THE AMERICAN CENTURY"

It is a commonplace, but it is a commonplace because it has so often been found true, that we suffer both from thinking too much of ourselves and from thinking too little of ourselves. This is undoubtedly the case also in our thinking about the American experiment. James Madison observed that beasts are not capable of government and angels do not need government. In conversation with a historian of the American experiment some years ago, I was struck by his passing remark that the American founding took place in a "relatively brief window of secular opportunity." By that he meant that, had the founding happened before about 1770 or after 1805, the controlling texts of our constitutional order would have been much more explicitly Christian in character. As it happened, the texts reflect a relatively brief period of the dominance of a variation of Enlightenment thought—although, to be sure, those texts must be understood, as the framers certainly did understand them, against the background assumptions of what in fact was a Christian society and culture.

"Christian America," as both fact and idea, has at times been prone to a vaulting idealism, as though we were angels quite untouched by the needs and impulses that afflict lesser beings. When rudely awakened by the experience of ideals betrayed, we, in our disillusionment, may mistake ourselves for fallen angels or even beasts. Beasts and angels—the two delusions feed each other. Both obscure the fact that we are simply, and ever so complicatedly, human—with all the possibilities and limitations that that entails. Americans have at times "theologized" their history, seeing this experiment as an instrument—maybe even *the* instrument—of God's unfolding purposes. That way of thinking has been out of fashion for some time now. When it was in vogue, it was sometimes attended by a doctrine of American "exceptionalism" so exaggerated that American purposes were depicted in angelic hues, untouched

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by the ambiguities, corruptions, and lust for power associated with mere mortals. Ernest Lee Tuveson's *Redeemer Nation* is a caution against that way of telling the American story. The caution is always in order. Those who think of themselves as angels may end up by giving themselves license to do things that are, in fact, quite beastly.

One reason American history is no longer told in terms of redemptive purpose is that we no longer think of history itself as having a purpose. History is a matter of this happening and then that happening and then the other thing happening, and who is to say what it all means? As the man said, "History is just one damn thing after another." The very idea that history should have a meaning strikes many of our contemporaries as highly improbable, maybe even nonsensical. If there is no purpose, there is no meaning. There is, although perhaps only on the surface, something attractively modest about this way of thinking. Especially when it is contrasted with the pride, presumption, and delusions of divinely ordained power that sometimes attended talk about "Christian America."

Admittedly, it is not so attractive when the apparent modesty disguises a self-denigration that is almost tantamount to self-hatred, as is sometimes evident in current forms of "multiculturalism." Among Christians committed to ecumenism there is a type that is aptly described as an ecumaniac. An ecumaniac is defined as someone who loves every church but his own. So it is that multiculturalists are forever discovering superiorities in other cultures, oblivious to the fact that, in the larger human story, Western culture is singular in its eagerness to praise and learn from other cultures. One is never more distinctively Western than when criticizing what is distinctively Western. The same holds for being American. In our multiculturalism we display our superiority by demonstrating our ability to see through what others—mistakenly, we say—admire in our culture. So maybe this new and self-denigrating way of telling the American story is not so modest after all.

The Tie That Binds

Whatever were the problems with "theologizing" the American experiment, the near disappearance of that tradition may reflect a failure of nerve and imagination, a loss of confidence in providential purpose, a refusal to accept the responsibility that attends the reality of Christian America. It is surely easier to treat Christianity as a purely private matter of individual salvation or, as it is more commonly said these days, of personal spirituality. A great advantage of privatized religion is that it does not risk giving offense in a "religiously pluralistic society." Nor, since it is tailored to our "felt needs," does it place inconvenient demands upon us.

Yet even the boldest among us might not be quite prepared to embrace the vision of Governor John Winthrop as he spoke to those who were, more than 350 years ago, preparing to establish the Holy Commonwealth in the New World. "Thus stands the cause between God and us," he declared while still aboard the *Arbella*. "We are entered into covenant with Him for this work; we have taken out a commission, the Lord hath given us leave to draw our own articles. . . . We shall find that the God of Israel is among us. For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us." President Ronald Reagan was the last major public figure to speak of America as a city upon a hill, and his allusions to that venerable tradition were derided as a gross instance of either naiveté or hubris, or maybe both. But most of the American people seemed to like it well enough. Maybe because it spoke to their sense of pride and, just possibly, their sense of responsibility. Upon his election in 1992, President Bill Clinton also spoke of a "New Covenant," but the image did not catch on—perhaps because it ran into the conspicuously uncovenantal practices of the Clinton presidency—and it was soon dropped.

The constituting idea of the American experiment was that we are bound together not simply by a social contract but by a covenant. The biblical idea of covenant embraced by earlier Americans is something deeper and more profound and more binding than a contract; it also engages another party, a party who transcends the agreements that we strike among ourselves. The other party, of course, is God. The idea of covenant is almost entirely absent from our public discourse today. Many educated Americans have never heard of it. Those who are familiar with it were taught that it was discredited because of the abuses to which it led, or simply because it was part of the religious baggage that a thoroughly secular society, such as ours presumably is, must leave behind.

The myth of a covenant, we are told, is simply no longer believable. From Thomas Hobbes in the seventeenth century through John Rawls in the twentieth, it was replaced by the myth of the social contract. I expect people counted the myth of the social contract more believable because it was a myth of their own creation. It was a fiction pure and simple, but it had the attraction of being *our* fiction. According to this story, human beings emerged from a "state of nature" in order to constitute society. Or, in the case of John Rawls, they are behind a pre-social "veil of ignorance" making deals with one another

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according to their calculated self-interest and thus bringing "society," with its key idea of justice, into being. No matter how sophisticated, or at least complicated, theories of social contract may be, they are as thoroughly made up as nursery tales. In fact, there are not and never have been human beings apart from societies. The individual person does not emerge from isolation *into* society but *from* society. Some societies are called primitive and some are called advanced, but society is the constant in the human story. The "state of nature" and "veil of ignorance" are fables; nobody has ever encountered, nor can we even plausibly hypothesize, persons apart from society.

All societies that we know of have myths of origin, usually involving God or the gods. The cultures to which they give rise, whether we call them primitive or advanced, are grounded in cult. The same must be true of any society we can imagine. A society must, in order to be sustained, have a story about itself, and stories must have a beginning. After the terrible experience of the European wars of religion occasioned by the sixteenth-century Reformation, many of the brightest and best, including many thoughtful Christians, decided that God and the gods could have no place in the *public* telling of the myth of origins. Hence the attractiveness of the new myth of the social contract.

Of course the contract is in the mode of "let's pretend," but it is our pretending. And some fictions can be eminently useful, if we can persuade ourselves to pretend. According to some versions of the American founding, John Locke was the original teller of the contractual tale. But that version has never enjoyed a monopoly. Hovering in the background—and sometimes pressing to front stage center—is the other story, the story of John Winthrop's covenant. In the beginning, and all along the way, America is the product of a Puritan-Lockean synthesis, and sometimes the synthesis has looked more like an inherently contradictory muddle.

By What Authority?

The classic text of this American synthesis is, of course, the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration begins with contract-sounding language. The American people had decided to change the terms of a prior agreement. "When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another . . ." But the Declaration then quickly moves, in the very same sentence, to the question of by what right or by what authority such a change is to be made. The authority invoked is "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God." Far from pretending to be constituting a world ex nihilo, the framers appeal to "self-evident truths" such as the assumed fact that all are created equal and "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

Throughout our history, there is an oscillation—some call it a tension or even a conflict—between contract and covenant. It is conventionally, but much too simply, thought that the Enlightenment is on the contract side and "Christian America" on the covenant side. The truth is that, as, for instance, in Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*, contract thinking engages ideas of promise and obligation that take on at least the appearance of being covenantal. At the same time, Christianity provides an anthropology of persons created in the image of God that is the notion of human dignity undergirding presumably "contractual" ideas such as the Declaration's claim that just government derives from the consent of the governed. Such is the confused and confusing oscillation—and perhaps mutual dependence—of Enlightenment contract and "Christian America."

There is no denying that the idea of "Christian America" has been abused at times. Among the abuses was the notion that America had a "manifest destiny" to redeem the world. Speaking at the turn of the last century in the United States Senate, the politician-historian Albert J. Beveridge set forth what was then a widely held view. "God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration," Beveridge declared.

> No. He made us master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigned. He has given us the spirit of progress to overwhelm the forces of reaction throughout the earth. He has made us adept in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples. Were it not for such a force as this the world would relapse into barbarism and night. And of all our race He has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the redemption of the world.

Such sentiments would today be condemned, and not without justice, as racist, chauvinist, imperialist, and a half dozen other anathemas that come readily to mind. President Woodrow Wilson spoke in terms more moderate and it is still possible to quote him, as it is not possible to quote Beveridge, in polite company. Wilson had no doubt that America was

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God's instrument in making the world "safe for democracy." Decisively formed as he was by a Calvinist understanding of covenant and history, Wilson thought he knew that "America had the infinite privilege of fulfilling her destiny and saving the world." What we might call free-standing Wilsonianism—Wilsonianism removed from its religious and theological foundation—is still a respectable view among those who write about the need for a compelling "national purpose." When President Reagan spoke about American purpose in opposing "the evil empire" of Soviet Communism, he spoke in terms that his predecessor eleven times removed would likely have found unexceptionable. The criticism of Reagan at the time was that, by referring to "evil," he was reintroducing to public discourse a moral category that is dangerously close to the language of religion and divine destiny that America had long since outgrown. It was, in fact, the language of Wilson, and the dominant language of American leadership from the founding until fairly recently.

A decade ago, Francis Fukuyama launched a very lively public discussion about "the end of history." It is not entirely fair to Fukuyama's argument, but it was widely assumed that, after the end of Communist totalitarianism, "the end of history" meant that the alternatives to liberal democracy had been exhausted. In this construal, the end of history—meaning, more or less, the globalization of our kind of political and economic order—depended neither upon social contracts nor upon the promise of covenantal purpose. It was, so to speak, just how history is turning out. This does not satisfy some in our time who call for a new and grand and compelling assertion of "national purpose." Henry Luce of *Time* was premature. It is the twenty-first century that must be "the American century." This is what I call free-standing Wilsonianism—Wilsonianism without Wilson's understanding of the Puritan-Lockean synthesis. It is a highly dubious and potentially dangerous position.

It seems to be the case that America is, and probably will be as far as we can see, the "lead society" of world-historical change. God knows, the world deserves a better lead society than the United States, but it's the only one around at present. The role of lead society requires moral definition, and there is, I believe, no adequate moral definition without reference to historical purpose. Which means that at the beginning of the twenty-first century we are, if we would reconstitute the experiment, returned to the founding dialectic between contract and covenant.

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ In this issue, we once again take on, as we have many times in recent years, the always changing debate over evolution as science, philosophy, and, if we are to believe some of its more ardent proponents, as quasi-religion. Readers tend to have strong opinions on this subject, and some express impatience with us because we continue to publish alternative, and sometimes conflicting, arguments. "Whose side are you on, anyway?" I am asked. I am definitely on the side of those who debunk the promotion of mindless materialism and determinism under the guise of a scientific theory of evolution. And I am very much on the side of those scientists who, unintimidated by evolutionary dogma, try to provide more adequate explanations of reality as it can be known. At the same time, I am in the company of those who want to enhance collaboration between science and theology, and to avoid any risk of resuscitating that nineteenth-century intellectual fossil, the "war" between science and religion. The rock-bottom presumption is that all truth is one because the source of all that is is one. "Design theory" and other probings hold the promise of opening up space through which we can move beyond the gridlock in which debates about creation, origins, and development have been trapped for a wearyingly long time. The editors have no delusions that there is going to be a definitive resolution of these debates any time soon. But the scientific, philosophical, and theological arguments are being reconfigured in interesting ways, and our continuing intention is to help the educated but nonspecialist reader to understand that—if I may be permitted the term—evolution. So, in answer to those who have asked, that's the side we're on.

■ Apologies to the Institute for Economic Affairs, London, for forgetting to acknowledge their kind permission to publish Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' article "Markets and Morals" in the August/September issue. An earlier version of that piece was given as a lecture at IEA and reprinted in a booklet entitled *Morals and Markets.*

■ The municipal council of Gamle in Oslo, Norway, has authorized the Islamic muezzin's public call to prayer for three minutes at noon on Fridays. In response, the "Norwegian Association of Pagans" has requested permission to make the public call, "God does not exist. Come to our meetings." Having once agreed upon the premise, to do what?

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■ Senator Joseph Lieberman is "defining Orthodoxy down," says Jews for Morality, an Orthodox group. "Lieberman is going all around the United States sounding every bit like the caricature of a Bible-thumping old-time Fundamentalist preacher," the release continues. "It's insincere! It's totally based on polling and focus group research. It's a desecration of true religious faith!" Many Washington insiders are more temperate in expressing their view that Lieberman is something of a moral poseur. Says one friend, "He's always 'wrestling with his conscience,' but I'd be more impressed if his conscience won a match from time to time." Says another, "He's all yarmulke and no Torah." I don't think we need get into the question of the Senator's sincerity. Although he and other candidates should not be making their campaign pitches from Protestant and synagogue pulpits, it is, all in all, a good thing that the Senator is asserting the legitimacy of making connections between politics, moral judgment, and religious faith. And I am not untouched—nor, I hope, am I unduly influenced—by his quoting my work in his public statements. That the argument is being made by a Jew has muted somewhat the criticisms of the usual proponents of the naked public square. Although it is a nice touch that the Anti-Defamation League is charging that Lieberman is "alienating the American people," which would seem to imply a dramatic broadening of ADL's understanding of its constituency. Only in America, as it is said. Yet how can an Orthodox Jew support the unlimited abortion license of *Roe v. Wade*, oppose the ban on infanticide (a.k.a. partial-birth abortion), and vote for making homosexuality a constitutionally privileged way of life? I suppose the most charitable interpretation is that Lieberman believes that these are facts of American life that the law can do little to remedy. This would put him in the "personally opposed, but . . ." camp, but even to express his personal opposition might be seen as a criticism of the Vice President (who seems positively enthusiastic about abortion, infanticide, and homosexuality) and encourage those who are engaged in what Lieberman views as a futile and divisive effort to "turn back the clock." The fact, of course, is that even one or two appointments to the Supreme Court could effectively reverse *Roe v. Wade* and redress other malfeasances of a wayward judiciary. That fact makes the Supreme Court perhaps the most important single issue in the current election. It is neither necessary nor nice to impugn Senator Lieberman's sincerity. It is enough that he is wrong. Very wrong.

■ Here is a dustup that will, I expect, soon pass, but it raises questions about science and ideology that will likely be with us for a long time. When Randy Thornhill and Craig Palmer published *A Natural History of Rape: Biological Bases of Sexual Coercion*, it was not only feminists who reacted with rage to the argument that rape is somehow biologically natural for human males who have limited access to women. The argument is an exercise in "evolutionary psychology," which used to be called sociobiology. Jerry A. Coyne teaches evolutionary biology at the University of Chicago, and he says that evolutionary psychology is certainly not a science (because it is not testable or falsifiable) and is mostly bunkum. "If evolutionary biology is a soft science," he writes, "then evolutionary psychology is its flabby underbelly." He continues: "But the public can be forgiven for thinking that evolutionary biology is equivalent to evolutionary psychology. Books by Daniel Dennett, E. O. Wilson, and Steven Pinker have sold briskly, and evolutionary psychology dominates the media coverage of the science of evolution. (It has figured also in the media's treatment of politics, as when the lustful activity of Bill Clinton was explained—or explained away—by various evolutionary psychologists as the behavior of an 'alpha male.') In view of the scientific shakiness of much of the work, its popularity must rest partly on some desire for a comprehensive 'scientific' explanation of human behavior. Evolutionary psychology satisfies the post-ideological hunger for a totalistic explanation of human life, for a theory of inevitability that will remove many of the ambiguities and the uncertainties of emotional and moral life. Freud is no longer the preferred behavioral paradigm. Now Darwin is ascendant. Blame your genes, not your mother." Coyne offers a detailed and devastating critique of the dubious, and sometimes downright false, claims of scientific evidence adduced by Thornhill and Palmer, but he notes that, in their minds, their position is impregnable. That is because they believe that resistance to their theories about the evolutionary naturalness of rape or anything else is itself a product of evolution. If you do not believe in evolution as an all-encompassing explanation of everything, it is because evolutionary psychology has programmed you not to believe it. "This," writes Coyne, "is one of the ways in which the new evolutionary psychologists resemble the old Marxists: there is no place to stand outside their system of meaning, except for the privileged place where they themselves stand." This is the famous Marxist "dialectic" by which contradictions are agreements, and vice versa. So why are the media and much of the public enamored of the doctrinaire pronouncements of evolutionary psychology? Coyne answers: "They enjoy the advantage that people seem to like scientific explanations for their behavior, and

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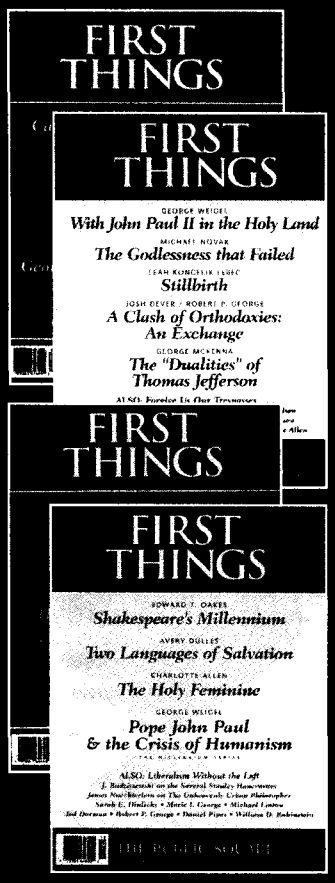

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the certainty that such explanations provide. It is reassuring to impute our traumas and our misdeeds to our savanna-dwelling ancestors. It lessens the moral pressure on our lives. And so the disciplinary hubris of evolutionary psychology and the longing for certainty of ordinary men and women have combined to create a kind of scientistic cargo cult, with everyone waiting in vain for evolutionary psychology to deliver the goods that it doesn't have." Coyne's critique is persuasive, but one keeps in mind that he has a vested interest in separating his "soft science" of evolutionary biology from the wackiness of evolutionary psychology. Otherwise, more people might become skeptical of the evolutionary faith itself.

■ On March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation, Mary Ann Glendon of Harvard Law School spoke at a Jubilee Day for Women in Washington. She reflected on the life of Dorothy Day, who died in 1980 and is now a candidate for beatification. It is no secret that many Catholics have a deep ambivalence toward Dorothy Day, admiring her orthodoxy and personal piety while deploring her doctrine of economics, or vice versa. As Joseph Pearce reports in his recent *Literary Converts* (Ignatius), Evelyn Waugh visited Day in the 1950s, finding her to be "an imperious woman who thinks we would be better off if we were all poor." Waugh was not persuaded. Professor Glendon, however, directs our attention to why many others think Dorothy Day should be raised to the honor of the altar. "In the roaring '20s, when Dorothy Day was in *her* 20s, she lived a life that she later described as 'drifting.' She had numerous love affairs; a short marriage; a longer cohabitation; a child born out of wedlock; and an abortion followed by the pain of being abandoned by the father of the child she had aborted. Significantly, she titled her autobiographical account of those years *The Long Loneliness.* Not long after the birth of her daughter Tamar, Dorothy became a Catholic. Thereafter, she lived a life of voluntary poverty, devoting herself to raising her child and to caring for the poor and homeless. Together with Peter Maurin, she founded the Catholic Worker movement. What accounted for the dramatic change in Dorothy's life? The grace of God to be sure. But Dorothy Day was prompted to open her heart to that grace by the witness of other human beings—especially by the religious sisters whom she saw day in and day out feeding the poor in the depths of the Depression era. Dorothy began lending a hand to these women, and she began to question them. Throughout her life, she did 'not cease to put questions to Christ.' In the film based on her life, *Entertaining Angels*, one moving scene shows Dorothy storming into church after a day of dreadful disappointments, standing before the crucifix and asking, 'What do you want from me?' The answer, she comes to understand, is 'Everything.' Whatever the outcome of the proceedings in Rome, Dorothy's story speaks powerfully to young women today. For, unfortunately, the bohemian lifestyle of artists and intellectuals in the 1920s has spread to all corners of our society. It has taken a terrible toll, especially on women and children. How fortunate we are this morning, then, to be sustained by our shared faith and fellowship. As we thank God for the inestimable privilege of those gifts, let us give thanks for the life of Dorothy Day and pray that her example will lead ever more women out of their 'long loneliness' into the love of God. And let us not forget to give thanks for those wonderful sisters whose Christian witness helped to open Dorothy's heart to grace. I would like to think that perhaps we here might even follow their example. Could not each one of us resolve to reach out to the Dorothys we may know who are still lonely and drifting—that their voices too may be heard in a mighty chorus of yes to God."

■ In our seminar in Krakow, Poland, now in its ninth year, I have regularly urged young people to write the stories of what happened during the years under the Soviet empire. This often meets with resistance. One reason given is that they want to put that time behind them. Another reason given, which is not untouched by honor, is that they do not want to embarrass their parents. A third reason is documented by the Vienna-based Pastoral Forum in a project called "God After Communism." Several volumes of research published by the Forum indicate that a majority of people in Central and Eastern Europe think that there was no persecution of the Church under communism. The more thoroughly secularized the population—the former East Germany is a notable instance—the stronger is the opinion that the Communist regimes imposed nothing but a reasonable regulation of religion. A Forum researcher explains that most people have been effectively instructed by intellectuals and media leaders who are not Christians, since Christians under communism were excluded from university education and positions of influence. "The great task at present," he says, "is the formation of a new Christian intellectual class, including professionals, academics, and journalists, who will be able to carry the gospel message to the highest levels of society." And who will be disposed to tell the truth about the evil empire.

■ So where, amidst all the categories by which academics slot thinkers, should we locate the monumental achievement of theologian Wolfhart

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Pannenberg? In an appreciative evaluation of his work, George Sumner of Wycliffe College, Toronto, says the wineskins of the old categories may not be adequate for the new wine. "But in the end, arguments over the 'post' position are tiresome and unhelpful. Is Pannenberg a modernist or postmodern, a 'foundationalist' or 'postfoundationalist,' a 'liberal' or a 'postliberal'? The question that matters is whether one's theological reflection consists of explicating God's Word read according to the rule of faith, or whether one is inhibited from doing so. Call it what you will, that is the place where the roads part. The most telltale sign of inhibition may be the endless obsession with method, no matter what the cause to which it is mustered. Volume 3 [of Pannenberg's *Systematic Theology*] suffers from no such block, but deals with substantive theological issues on the realistic assumption of the presence of the risen Christ. That is what truly locates Pannenberg as a theologian for the long haul. Still, it is worth noting that Volume 3, and so *Systematic Theology* as a whole, succeeds with little need of help from, and only occasional references to, all those heavy methodological lifting machines from earlier in his career. In a theologian who spent two decades devoted to building and operating those machines, their absence does seem strange. To the postliberal, that absence, and its attendant freedom, are telling and reassuring facts after all."

■ Among the several organizations that have in recent years adopted sincerely flattering names is the Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life, based at Trinity College, Hartford, and funded by the Pew foundation. They publish a useful little quarterly, *Religion in the News*, that intends to encourage better media coverage of religion. The editors might themselves need a little encouragement on that score. Here is an article on the "near-death experience" of the National Council of Churches, in which the author suggests that the Council might be revitalized by promoting the "charitable choice" provision of the 1996 welfare reform, a provision that, as the author notes, the Council opposed "with maximal fervor." In the course of an interesting article, there is this: "Unlike evangelical Protestants, mainline and liberal Protestants have a tradition of social service provision and a substantial inclination to reach out to others through service." Really? Perhaps our friends at Hartford might undertake a study of how many liberal and how many evangelical programs there are reaching out to people in need. My hunch is that the evangelical list would be more impressive, especially were one to control for programs that are unabashedly Christian in motivation and substance. It would be a worthy project for an organization that calls itself the Center for the *Study* of Religion in Public Life.

■ *Sursum Corda* is the newsletter of the Charismatic Episcopal Church. On the front page of every issue is prominently printed its motto from Psalm 115, *Non nobis, Domine, sed nomini tuo da gloriam* (Not to us, Lord, but to your name give the glory). Perhaps I am wrong in thinking there is something a bit odd about that in a newsletter devoted to relentless boosterism on behalf of the Charismatic Episcopal Church.

■ Teachers, from grade school through graduate school, are the largest single category of FT subscribers, and they may be especially interested in "History Textbooks at the New Century" by Gilbert T. Sewall, a report of the American Textbook Council. The forty-page report examines history texts used in elementary and secondary schools and concludes, if I may put it somewhat too simply, that American and world history is being "problematized" to death. For a copy of the report, send $10 (postage included) to the Council at 475 Riverside Drive, Room 448, New York, New York 10115.

■ As an alternative for those who are not "ready" for marriage, the French have instituted what is called *Pacte civil de solidarité*, otherwise known as PACS. It's a contract of sorts, with a lot of outs. That feisty newsletter *catholic eye* observes that it took the Church many centuries to domesticate wild libidinal urges in the institution of marriage, and that work is now being undone with stunning rapidity. "We tend to think that the good can take an awful lot of punishment. The occasional bohemian artist a century or two ago, throwing rocks at the edifice of traditional morality in the name of liberty of conscience or artistic freedom or free love, would probably be astonished to view the rubble heap he and those like him have made of it. Many of those young French couples cowering from the commitment of till-death-do-us-part or the responsibilities of parenthood vaguely intend to marry one day, but they want to be 'sure' and they want to be 'ready.' When that time comes they will poke around amid the debris of the modern era, hunting for an unbroken block of stone marked 'marriage.'"

■ My former associate here at the institute, Paul Stallsworth, is a Methodist minister in North Carolina who simply never stops in his devotion to doing the right thing. His latest contribution is editing a booklet, *Thinking Theologically About Abortion*, with

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essays by Elizabeth Achtemeier, Carl Braaten, Leonard Klein, and your scribe. The booklet emerges from a conference of pro-life pastors that Paul helped organize and is being widely distributed among United Methodists and others. It is available from Bristol House at Post Office Box 4020, Anderson, Indiana 46013-0020 (1-800-451-READ) at a price of $6.95.

■ "I believe the story of Adam and Eve is one of the most theologically and psychologically destructive stories ever written," writes the pastor of St. Peter's Church in Chicago's Loop. It says here that he has also committed a book titled *Fashioning a Healthier Religion.* It figures. The loopiness, if I may be permitted the term, continues: "Humans became God's scapegoat. Rather than blame our Maker we decided to blame ourselves. A tremendous burden of guilt and shame has overshadowed us since. . . . What a tremendous guilt trip we have undertaken! Rather than risk an imperfect Creator, we have fashioned ourselves as perpetually rebellious ingrates. . . . I believe we are the way we are precisely because God wanted us to be this way. . . . We have never 'fallen' from perfection. We have never been banned from paradise. We have never been exiled east of Eden." It would seem to follow there that is no need for incarnation, redemption, repentance, or forgiveness—although on the last score he writes that "we should finally forgive our mythical first parents." Such are the thoughts offered under the title of "Pastoral Musings" by a man who heads a staff of some thirty Franciscan Friars who run St. Peter's. So why do I mention one out of innumerable available instances of theological silliness? Because an influential Protestant friend who is skeptical about the project known as "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" came across the parish bulletin of St. Peter's and asks me, "How can the Catholic Church justify such heresy?" The simple answer is that she doesn't, but she does put up with a lot of nonsense. I'm not sure the pastor's musings rise to the level of heresy. They are more in the nature of addle-brained feel-goodism that in a therapeutic culture produces a popular genre that might be called Positive Thinking for Dummies. Norman Vincent Peale would be embarrassed. But consider: Chicago is a tough place, and the Loop is the heart of Chicago. One imagines this poor priest being beaten down by trying to respond to the sins of a world radically out of whack, and then taking some whimsical time out to design a more agreeable religion. Why he would publish his musings in a form that might confuse his "healthier religion" with Christianity is another matter. Something should probably be done about that. There are remedies, such as theological education, spiritual formation, episcopal oversight—and conversion. All else failing, it may be that the best we can hope for is a more selective accentuation of the priest shortage. In response to my Protestant friend, however, we can know, some nonmythical priests notwithstanding, what it is that the Catholic Church teaches, which does not include fashioning a religion to our taste. Incidentally, I note from the bulletin that St. Peter's has a very extensive schedule for confessions. That may, in charity, be taken as further evidence that the pastor could not possibly believe what he says he believes. Unless, of course, absolution and penance are replaced by a ritual agreement that God is to blame. But one tries hard to think that, even in the Loop, that is unthinkable.

■ Many textbooks and the literature from major foundations such as Ford and Rockefeller persist in raising alarums about a "population explosion." The facts are to the contrary. This, for example, from the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute: "Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, has warned that by 2025 nearly a third of Europeans will be collecting pensions as a result of falling fertility rates and consequently aging populations. The United Nations has reported that sixty-one countries, including all of Europe, have fertility rates below replacement level and that this year another nineteen countries are expected to be added to the list. The average rate in Western Europe is now 1.6 children per woman, and in Eastern Europe it is even lower at 1.3. Italy's population is on course to fall by 28 percent to only forty-one million before 2050." What appears to be the death wish of entire societies gives new meaning to "the culture of death." I know my bias is showing, but I've often thought that, were it necessary for one nation to rule the world, I hope it is the Italians. They have so admirably demonstrated how to get along without government. They will be sorely missed.

■ I don't know why his books are out of print. Years ago Elie Wiesel described Chaim Grade as "one of the greatest—if not the greatest—of living Yiddish novelists. Surely he is the most authentic." There is in his writings none of the *Fiddler on the Roof* kitsch that is too often to be found in the stories of, for instance, Isaac Bashevis Singer with their wandering souls (dybbuks) and other contrivances that turn Eastern European shtetls into set pieces for the borscht circuit. There is cutting humor in Grade, but his gift is chiefly the uncompromising depiction

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of people caught up in the passions and conflicts of Lithuanian Jewry during the interwar period. Grade died in 1982, and among his books in English translation are *The Well, The Yeshiva* (two volumes), *Rabbis and Wives*, and a memoir, *The Seven Little Lanes*. "Laybe-Layzar's Courtyard" is one of three stories in *Rabbis and Wives* (1982). Rabbi Yoel Weintraub has given up being rav of Zaskowicz because he cannot bring himself to tell his poor congregants that Jewish law forbids their doing so many things that seem relatively innocent. He moves to the big city and becomes a Porush, a reclusive Talmudic scholar who spends his days studying in a beth midrash and living off charity. His antagonist in the story is Reb Heskiah, a rigidly observant Jew who destroys his family and alienates his neighbors with his relentless piety. Weintraub argues that, by demanding total observance, the young are driven away from Judaism, figuring that, if they have broken one law, they might as well break them all. Heskiah counters that the young fall away because people like Weintraub propose an observance that is not entirely serious. It is a perennial argument that goes on, mutatis mutandis, among people of all religions. Here is Reb Heskiah on Yom Kippur: "As he knelt on his weary knees during the cantor's recitation of the Temple Service for the Day of Atonement; as he shut his eyes tight and clenched his teeth during the 'Hear O Israel'; as he stood long and frozen during the Silent Prayer, moving only to bow at the appropriate blessing and to beat his chest solemnly during the confessional, the 'Al Hayt'—Reb Heskiah kept praying over and over for but one thing: 'Lord of the Universe, give me the strength to remain stubborn!' This generation was strange to him. His own children and even the supposedly pious Jews were strange to him. Everyone was looking for dispensations, interested only in finding out that they were permitted to do whatever they wished, desiring nothing more than to get by with the minimum of precepts in service to the Creator of the Universe and His Torah. Even a rabbi, the Porush, believed in bargaining with God. And that's what the people wanted—witness the fact that the people of Zaskowicz had come to the Porush, Rabbi Yoel Weintraub, and begged him to return and become their Rav once again. It was a new world, a world of cutting corners, of bargaining and compromise: half for the Almighty and half for . . . But this was the Day of Judgment—he did not want to accuse his fellow Jews on this day. He spoke only for himself, and all he asked was that the Lord help him to live only for Him. He did not want to just get by, he wanted to accept stricter laws, to bend under a still heavier yoke of ritual and custom." Chaim Grade's sympathies are clearly, but not too clearly, with Rabbi Weintraub. But the power of his writing is in helping us understand the zeal of Reb Heskiah and so many others wracked by the possible impossibilities of fidelity to a covenant in a world radically at odds with its Creator. As I say, I don't know why his books are out of print. It is a great pity, and should be remedied. Meanwhile, Chaim Grade is a name to keep in mind when visiting a library or browsing a used book store.

■ It would be objectionable anywhere, but it is particularly striking to find in *Worship*, a publication of St. John's Abbey, Minnesota, a recommendation of Princeton's Peter Singer. The author, Nathan D. Mitchell, a former Benedictine, allows that Singer has "controversial" views on items such as population control, euthanasia, and family planning. He does not mention that Singer is today's most prominent advocate of infanticide. (The five Supreme Court Justices in *Stenberg v. Carhart* do not advocate infanticide. They simply claim that the Constitution, as they construe it, forbids forbidding it.) What Mitchell finds "challenging" are Singer's views on world poverty, which, readers may remember from earlier comment in this space, turn on his utilitarian calculus of what makes one a "decent" human being (a calculus by which, Singer admits, he is guilty of indecent selfishness). This is the first instance that has come to my attention in which Peter Singer is held up as a moral authority in a Catholic publication. There is no shortage of Catholic statements, official and personal, on world poverty. The choice of Peter Singer as an authority would seem to serve no purpose other than to try to legitimate him and his views. Mitchell learns from Singer that "the plain fact is that, in today's world, *moral* problems are—more often than not—*economic* problems." I don't know where that leaves the cardinal sins, only one of which (greed) would seem to be mainly economic, or moral problems such as abortion, divorce, marital infidelity, and a host of criminal acts. Mitchell is a certified expert on sacramental theology. He concludes his article with this: "Perhaps the most profound modern comment ever made about the Eucharist came from the lips of the great Hindu pacifist Mohandas Ghandi: 'I think that if Christ ever comes to India, he'd better come as bread.'" If "modern" means, say, the last three hundred years, it is depressing to think how little that is profound has been said about the Eucharist. At least according to Mitchell. And, if Ghandi is right, Our Lord would be well advised upon his return to drop that business about man not living by bread alone. Happily, Mitchell is quite wrong. Many things

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immeasurably more profound have been said about the Eucharist. Some of them in the pages of *Worship*.

■ The charges and counter-charges go on and on over what Pius XII did or did not do, should have done or should not have done, during World War II. One of the least persuasive claims is that the Holocaust, and maybe the war, would have ended if he had threatened to excommunicate Hitler and Mussolini, both of whom had long since excommunicated themselves. (An official statement of excommunication simply confirms what people have done to themselves.) This is brought to mind in reading a very useful little book by Joel S. Panzer, *The Popes and Slavery* (Alba House). Beginning with Pope Eugene IV in 1435, when the Portuguese launched the modern slave trade in the Canary Islands, popes condemned slavery in no uncertain terms, decreeing excommunication for all who participated in the practice. Similar condemnations, typically citing earlier papal precedents, were issued by Paul III, Gregory XIV, Urban VIII, and on up through Pius IX and Leo XIII in the nineteenth century. Prior to the Civil War, in what Father Panzer aptly calls a form of American Gallicanism, bishops in the U.S., to their shame, claimed that the papal condemnations of slavery did not apply to the "peculiar circumstances" in this country. Whether in Germany in 1939 or America in 1850 and 2000, the threat of excommunication is only as powerful as is the priority that people accord to being in full communion with the Church. Yet it may be argued that the integrity of the Church and her teaching requires imposing the censure, even if it is not effective in changing what people do. That is an argument that some make today in connection with Catholic politicians who, in direct contradiction of magisterial teaching, support the unlimited abortion license of *Roe v. Wade*. It is an argument that needs to be engaged more forthrightly than it has been to date. At the same time, however, historical experience with, inter alia, slavery, anti-Semitism, and abortion lends little support to the stereotype that, when the Church speaks authoritatively, the Catholic people fall into line. Worth noting also is the fact that those who, in the case of Pius XII, claim that he should have fiercely wielded the supposed sword of excommunication are usually the same people who condemn what they view as papal authoritarianism. The reality is that, in the words of John Paul II in the 1990 encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (The Mission of the Redeemer), "The Church imposes nothing, she only proposes." That being said, she can also, as in the instance of abortion, publicly censure those who claim to accept the proposal that she teaches God's truth but manifestly have not.

■ The praise heaped on Dava Sobel's *Galileo's Daughter* (Walker) is, in my judgment, fully deserved. So the answer is No to a reader who suggests it is a thinly veiled polemic against the Catholic Church. On the contrary, Sobel, who is Jewish, is at pains to depict the complexity of seventeenth-century politics, religion, science, and art—all encompassed within vibrant Christian faith, and not least the vibrant faith of Galileo and his daughter, Sister Maria Celeste. The story is built around the letters of Sr. Maria Celeste, who, confined to a convent near Florence, sustained her father through his every tribulation. I have some caveats, such as Sobel's downplaying of how very difficult a character Galileo made himself, almost inviting warfare from those troubled by his ideas. This aspect of Galileo's personality was more sharply conveyed by *Galileo, A Life*, the 1994 biography by James Reston, Jr. But it is a great strength of Sobel's book that it exposes the simplistic telling of the story in terms of the lonely freethinker vs. an oppressive church. Not only does she underscore Galileo's faith, but she portrays how divided was ecclesiastical opinion toward him, and how his chief enemies were in the academic establishment of philosophers who refused to accommodate his demonstration of the Copernican insight into the structure of the universe. But *Galileo's Daughter* is chiefly the very human and humanizing story of Maria Celeste and her father, a moving account of adversity borne with grace. It is, all in all, a beautiful story beautifully told.

■ The Roper Center surveys the many surveys that have been done over the years and concludes that 93 percent of Americans are "believers" and 7 percent are "nonbelievers." More than half the nonbelievers might be called agnostics, subscribing to the statement, "I don't know whether there is a God, and I don't believe there is any way to find out." Three percent say, "I don't believe in God." I suppose a really hard-core atheist would say, "I believe there is no God." In any event, 9 percent of the nonbelievers say they attend religious services at least once a month, and 5 percent attend once a week or more. That may indicate uncertainty, or seeking, or going along with the family, or whatever. Of the 93 percent who are believers, 35 percent say they are politically "conservative," while 25 percent of the nonbelievers are conservative, which is not as big a difference as some studies would lead us to expect. Jews are 2 percent of believers and a little over 2 percent of the general population, but are 8 percent of the nonbelievers. Twenty percent of nonbelievers and 10 percent of believers have postgraduate education. Over 50 percent of nonbelievers indicate a "religious

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preference"—Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, or Other. Go figure. The upshot of all this numbers crunching is to provide occasion to observe, once again, how remarkably constant is the American religious situation—at least insofar as it is susceptible to the methods of survey research. Of course, some people may have a more immediate interest in these findings. For instance, a politician who talks in public about his relationship with Jesus Christ may take note that 51 percent say that would make them more likely to vote for him, while only 26 percent say it would make them less likely. He may also note, however, that 42 percent say a politician "should be guided by religious principle," while 46 percent say "religion and politics shouldn't mix." The trick, it would seem, is to be guided without mixing. The Roper survey, unsurprisingly, does not provide a formula for exactly how that might be done.

■ At Harvard University, Jack Kevorkian, who is serving a 10-to-25-year sentence for second degree murder, received in absentia a Citizen Activist Award, sponsored by the Gleitsman Foundation. The panel that selected Kevorkian included actor Ted Danson, feminist Gloria Steinem, and Candace Lightner, founder of Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Harvard psychiatrist Robert Coles was also on the panel but says he disagreed with the decision. Kevorkian will share the $100,000 award with Alabama attorney Bryan Stevenson, a crusader against the death penalty. Kevorkian has long advocated execution by lethal experiments or by removal of a prisoner's vital organs. Also on the embrace of death front, Derek Humphry's "how to" film on suicide, based on his book *Final Exit*, was shown on Hawaiian television, and was promptly followed by two people with a history of depression successfully following its instructions. Contacted in Eugene, Oregon, Humphry issued a statement: "The death of any person is deeply tragic, but if these people are intent on suicide and released themselves in a nonviolent way from their troubles, then I can live with that." Well, that's the important thing. Although one wonders about the notion of "nonviolent" killing, and whether Mr. Humphry has changed his mind and now believes that a desired exit from life is "tragic." The embrace of death confounds both mind and language.

■ Hardly a day goes by without good causes coming to our door in search of support. So what else is new? you might well ask, and you would be right. I'm sure we all try to do what we can, and sometimes it's just a matter of getting out the word to those who might be able to do more. For instance, there is *The Library of Early Christianity*, a project launched by Catholic University of America that is as ambitious as it is important. The goal is to make available in English, with facing pages in the original language, hundreds of texts that are foundational to the Christian tradition and Western Civilization. The National Endowment for the Humanities has made a large challenge grant that has to be matched this year by $300,000. If you or anyone you know might be of help, please contact Ms. Maureen Macaleer at Catholic Mission and Programs, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. 20064, phone (202) 319-6908, fax (202) 319-4330.

■ This is in the great ripostes department. I was speaking to Lutheran educators in Minneapolis a while back. One could not help but notice that the fellow giving the invocation was very small. He could hardly see over the podium. "I am often asked," he said, "'Were your parents very short?' To which I respond, 'Were your parents very obnoxious?'"

■ I was pleased to give the commencement address at Regent University (Pat Robertson, Chancellor) this spring. Afterwards a large number of people came up, each introducing himself or herself as "the token Catholic" at Regent. When about thirty people had done so, a faculty member who had been watching all this introduced himself, "I'm a Catholic, and I guess I'm no longer token." As it happens, the President of Regent is also Catholic, and I am told there is a lively Newman Center on campus. Robertson and Regent have been very supportive of the project known as "Evangelicals and Catholics Together," and I was impressed that this was one of many places where that project is impressively lived.

■ Sherwin B. Nuland of Yale's School of Medicine and author of the much praised *How We Die* is a strong proponent of physician-assisted suicide. His editorial in the *New England Journal of Medicine* takes note of Dutch reports on how many assisted suicides and direct acts of euthanasia are botched, causing additional pain to patients and distress to families. While he says he respects those who believe that doctors should not be in the business of killing people, "We are now hearing, if not a clear demand, a strong sentiment in favor of medical assistance in dying." So, he says, doctors should be trained to meet what he thinks is the coming demand, "better sooner than later." Then there is this noteworthy statement: "Many opponents of these practices point to the Hippocratic Oath and its prohibition on hastening death. But those who turn to the oath in an effort to shape or legitimize their ethical viewpoints must realize that the statement has been embraced over

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approximately the past two hundred years far more as a symbol of professional cohesion than for its content. Its pithy sentences cannot be used as all-encompassing maxims to avoid the personal responsibility inherent in the practice of medicine. Ultimately, a physician's conduct at the bedside is a matter of individual conscience. The wisdom of past years and moments enters into the deliberation, but decision making in the present bears a burden that is unique to the particular transaction between the doctor and the individual patient who has come for help. To seek refuge in ancient aphorisms is to turn away from the unique needs of each of our patients who have entrusted themselves to our care." And what is to inform the "individual conscience" when "ancient aphorisms" have been cast aside? Whatever the patient wants and, if it is not clear what the patient wants, whatever the doctor deems to be "the unique needs" of the patient. He is partly right about the status of the Hippocratic Oath today. Many medical schools no longer use it at graduation, and for at least one very understandable reason. I notice that the fifteenth edition of Bartlett's quotations has a convenient ellipsis in place of the oath's commitment not to aid in the killing of unborn children.

■ This past May the much troubled National Council of Churches (NCC) voted to explore a major reorganization that could include its going out of business in favor of a new organization that would include all the major Christian groupings in the country. That would be a daunting project. The identity of evangelical and fundamentalist churches is, in large part, based in opposition to the "ecumenical" or "liberal" churches of the NCC. In addition, a huge part of evangelicalism is made up of local churches with no national affiliation that could relate to such a new organization. As for the Catholic Church, while there is no theological or canonical obstacle to such a cooperative relationship, its membership is far larger than the combined forty-five-plus million members of the NCC's thirty-five denominations, thus creating the understandable concern that the Catholic presence would overwhelm all others. The possible demise of the NCC is itself an important development in American religious history. The organization never recovered from the critique launched in 1981 by the Institute on Religion and Democracy, a critique widely disseminated by popular media such as *60 Minutes* and *Reader's Digest*. In addition, various renewal movements within its major member denominations have increasingly alienated grassroots constituencies from what is perceived as the NCC's leftist orientation, both theologically and politically. But the prospect of the NCC's disappearance and the emergence of a more comprehensive organization should be of interest to all Christians. As Adam said to Eve on the way out of the garden, "My dear, we live in an age of transition."

■ Whatever one's view of the limits of free speech, or whether there should be any limits at all, it is understandable that Germany is acutely sensitive about anything referring to the Holocaust. Stringent laws forbid the denial, belittling, or relativizing of that horror by comparing it to lesser evils. There was therefore intense interest in the case of pro-life activists who demonstrated outside a German abortuary with a sign declaring "Holocaust then, Babycaust now." A federal court ruled in favor of the protesters, saying that the slogan "expressed the opinions of the protesters that today's practice of abortion is a mass extermination of life." The judges said such demonstrations are "a contribution to forming opinion in a matter that is fundamental and moving to the public in which we have to deal with the protection of living rights of the unborn."

■ Here is some propaganda from The Catholic Task Force of the Republican National Committee. Its mission statement begins, "We are Republicans who are also Catholic." First things first, anyone? Then there is a creed-like statement titled "I Am a Catholic Republican Because . . ." It professes faith in a market economy, racial justice, human freedom, family, and so forth. Very conspicuously, abortion is not mentioned. It concludes with this: "Finally, I believe as a Catholic Republican, it is the Republican Party which has always advocated and fostered those values closest to the teaching of the Catholic Church upon which America was built and to which America is now returning." Always? The claim is as pretentiously partisan as it would be were it made of the other party. As a lifelong Democrat except, in recent years, when it comes to voting (you can't go along with the party on everything), I declined the invitation to sign on with The Catholic Task Force.

■ An Atlanta conference on "The Spiritual State of Black America" heard John Hurst Adams, senior bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) warn that in the post-civil rights period blacks have been "damaged by excessive assimilation" into the spiritually corrupting core values—individualism, materialism, and ethical relativism—of late capitalist culture. The conference also noted that more Baptist pastors are now calling themselves bishops, especially "dynamic, entrepreneurial, neo-Pentecostal ministers

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who have developed megachurches and understand themselves to be reappropriating the clerical titles and styles of the New Testament." Tension was evident at the conference between the two wings of Islam in black America that claim the legacy of Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X. The son of Elijah Muhammad made clear that Sunni Islam could not recognize Minister Ava Muhammad, a woman appointed by the rival group headed by Louis Farrakhan, as a full-fledged imam. Amid changes both promising and troubling in the spiritual state of black America, there was general agreement at the conference that young people are increasingly disengaged from family, church, school, and work. It seems like a long, long way from the time when many hoped, not without reason, that the black church was taking the lead in something like a national awakening.

■ Those who understand the communion of saints know that heroes and heroines come in hosts even when they appear to be just a handful. For instance, people like Austin Ruse and Jeanne Head who operate on a shoestring out of a little office over at the United Nations where they coordinate a growing number of volunteers, especially young people, who challenge the rule of moral globalizers pressing the agenda of the culture of death. To receive Ruse's very informative "Friday Fax" with updates on UN developments, fax (212) 754-9291, or e-mail austinruse@c-fam.org.

■ In this kind of world, one cannot afford to knock niceness. But niceness takes you only so far, and only so far is not far enough in really important relationships, such as the Jewish-Christian dialogue. Interfaith dialogue as a community relations exercise is not enough. The International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC) is a coalition that includes ten secular and rabbinical groups and has been in regular conversation with the Holy See. But the Orthodox participants have vetoed any discussion of theology, what it is that Jews and Christians really believe as Jews and Christians. Such a crippling limitation on the dialogue has for a long time been a source of deep dissatisfaction to some of the Jews and Catholics involved. Now a new group has been put together, the Rabbinic Committee for Interreligious Dialogue (RCID), which includes also Orthodox rabbis. RCID recently held its first and very successful dialogue with Catholic theologians, including a representative of the Holy See. IJCIC chairman Seymour Reich is not pleased: "The decision of Vatican officials to meet with an independent group of rabbis who represent only themselves and not the main streams of Judaism and the organizations that speak for Jewish communal life introduces an element of ambiguity and confusion in Catholic-Jewish relations that cannot help but undermine our recently invigorated association." It is to be feared that Mr. Reich does not understand. Apart from the fact that no one organization or coalition of organizations can plausibly claim to speak for "Jewish communal life," nobody has a monopoly on the Holy See's attention. Among Christians, Jews, and many others, Rome is engaged in numerous dialogues. It is in the nature of being universal, as in "catholic." RCID recognizes, as IJCIC should recognize, that it is precisely the vigor and maturity of the dialogue that make it both possible and necessary to act on the maxim of the great Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel that interfaith dialogue begins with faith.

■ I see that *Christianity Today* has weighed in with *the* books of the last century, "classics that have shaped contemporary religious thought." Jaroslav Pelikan says that he despises such "beauty contests," and despises them even more when he is not named among the winners. His scorn will be tempered by CT's including his *Jesus Through the Centuries*, as I am pleased by the inclusion of *The Naked Public Square*. At the same time, any temptation to pride is checked by the editors' notation that C. S. Lewis books were nominated so often that they finally had to say, "Enough is enough; give some other authors a chance." So maybe we're included in the top one hundred only because yet another book by Lewis was excluded. The list is thoroughly ecumenical. Among authors with a clear religious identity, eleven are evangelical Protestant, nineteen are Roman Catholic, two are Orthodox (that now includes Pelikan, who was a Lutheran), and five are Jewish. That mix qualifies the criticism of CT's list in the same issue of the top ten books of 1999 for being less than ecumenical. Eight of the top ten are by evangelicals, and the list omits—inexplicably, in my judgment—George Weigel's monumental biography of John Paul II, *Witness to Hope*. And now we'll give literary beauty contests a rest for a while.

■ Upon leaving seminary, I surprised some teachers and friends by not moving on to the track toward becoming a professional academic. Instead, I eagerly plunged into inner-city parish ministry, while writing and editing on the side. The writing, editing, and speaking have over the years commanded more and more of my energies, but I hope it is the case, and I think it is the case, that the priestly ministry most deeply defines who I am. I do

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not have an animus against the academic life. It really is the case that some, perhaps most, of my closer friends are distinguished academics, and the institute and the journal could certainly not get along without them. But I do have a deep ambivalence about the academy, born from early experience with friends and associates who are given to what I call "bibliographical discourse." Their talk reflects less what they think or know than their success in navigating the books they have read, or claim to have read. This unseemly aspect of the academic life is nicely caught by Nobel laureate Czeslaw Milosz in his engaging little book of pensées, *Road-Side Dog* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). This excerpt is from an item entitled "Love of Knowledge." (I hasten to add that the aforementioned friends are excepted from the following depiction.) "In his school years Victor considered himself superior to his classmates, for he took an interest in so-called serious problems. He tried to read difficult books, though he did not boast by mentioning their titles, afraid of being mocked; he persisted in that reading to impress only himself. Toward the end of high school, he even bought the *Ethics* of Spinoza, but put it down after a few pages, for he did not understand a word. At the university, he chose a branch of studies that he judged prestigious enough for an individual of exceptional qualities. Dropping nonchalantly the name of his specialty when asked would help him considerably to stay in a good frame of mind. We do not hesitate to assert that Victor was a snob, for, after all, what is snobbery if not adding a little to one's height in one way or another? Some are proud of their ancestors, others of their wealth, whereas Victor saw himself in the robes of a scholar and strutted on the stilts of pretended wisdom. Whatever his ideas about himself, his diligence could not be doubted. Laboriously he plodded through abstruse books and, encountering unknown words, reached for dictionaries. Gradually the contents of those books, read attentively, were becoming clearer, and he acquired considerable competence, especially as he learned to use his time economically. We should add that he admired his own sharp intelligence, which justified, in his opinion, the high regard in which he held his own person, even if this was not kindly received by others. A certain inevitable discovery he made influenced his career; namely, he noticed that there was a gap between what one *should* know and what one *can* know. The quantity of theories, hypotheses, trends, names, papers, was so vertiginous that only a superhuman mind would have been able to cope with it. Thus, the initiated observed a tacit agreement: that they would not be held responsible for actually reading the works of celebrities whose names they like to invoke, and that the mention of these names meant that they had mastered a professional language. That language allowed them to move amid the plethora, in the same way that a man crosses a river by jumping from one ice floe to another. As Victor became aware of this, he stopped using his energy to collect information and concentrated on mastering the language. From that moment on, he advanced quickly."

■ In response to a gimlet-eyed reader: Yes, I did notice it, but, believe it or not, there are whole weeks in which I restrain myself from commenting on the *New York Times*. So now readers want to know what that's about, so here goes. In a front-page story, reporter Frank Bruni discusses George W's down-home ways with the English language. "Mr. Bush also offered an interesting variation on the saying about the pot and the kettle. 'Don't be takin' a speck out of your neighbor's eye,' he told the audience, 'when you got a log in your own.'" Mr. Bruni and his editors apparently don't know it, but there's a whole book full of those odd Texas sayings.

■ I'm a little late in noting the death of Rabbi Samuel H. Dresner, who, among his other distinctions, coauthored (with Robert K. Kaplan) the biography *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Prophetic Witness* (see FT, October 1998), in connection with which we reminisced about a man whom we both loved. Heschel had and has many disciples, but devotion to Heschel and his teachings was, it is fair to say, the thread of Sam Dresner's intellectual life. Born in 1923, ordained and married to Ruth in 1951, he taught with Heschel at Jewish Theological Seminary, but over the years was chiefly a congregational rabbi. Against considerable opposition, he contended for traditional Jewish teaching on family, marriage, and chastity. He also launched a national movement against undertakers who were pressuring Jews to buy expensive coffins, insisting instead on the Jewish tradition of a simple funeral and burial in a pine box. To know him was to know that he loved the God of Israel. *Alav ha-shalom.*

■ The poems in this issue are by Notre Dame's remarkable Ralph McInerny—teacher, philosopher, novelist, poet, and sometimes wicked wit. More of the delicious same may be found in his book, *Shakespearean Variations*, just published by St. Augustine's Press, South Bend, Indiana, and including variations on all 154 sonnets ($10 paper). Each of the sonnets begins with

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Shakespeare's opening line and then proceeds in its own direction.

■ "I always start at the back." I don't know how many times I've been told that. Readers often say it a bit sheepishly, as though they were cheating. Please. Start reading an issue at any point you wish. And please, do not feel obliged to read every word of every issue, as though you might be letting the editors down. We put so much in every issue on the assumption that not everything will be of equal interest to every reader. Our concern is that we don't let you down, or the people to whom you recommend FT. We will be happy to send a sample issue of this journal to people you think are likely subscribers. Please send names and addresses to FIRST THINGS, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, New York 10010 (or e-mail to subscriberservices@pma-inc.net). On the other hand, if they're ready to subscribe, call toll-free 1-800-783-4903.

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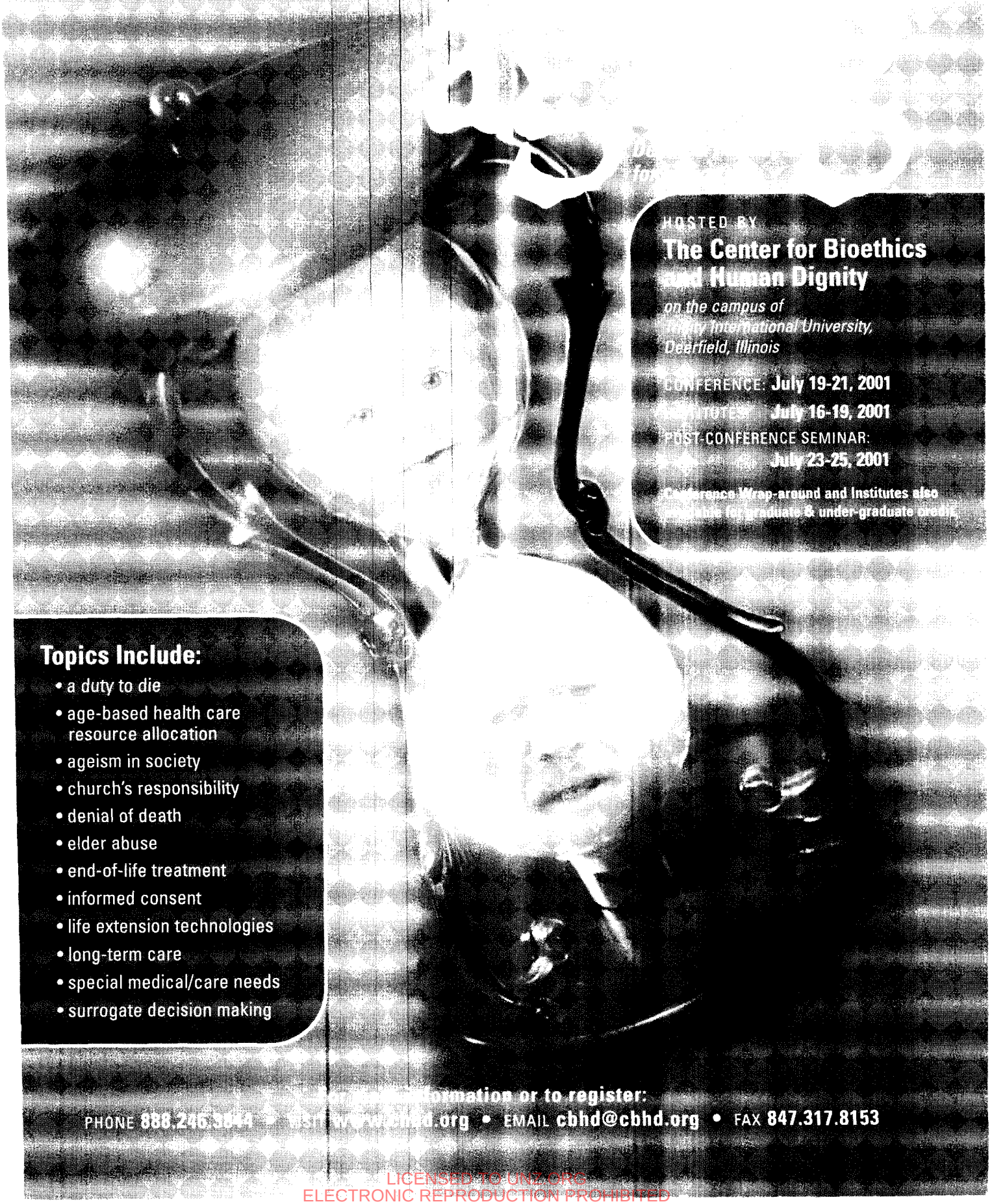

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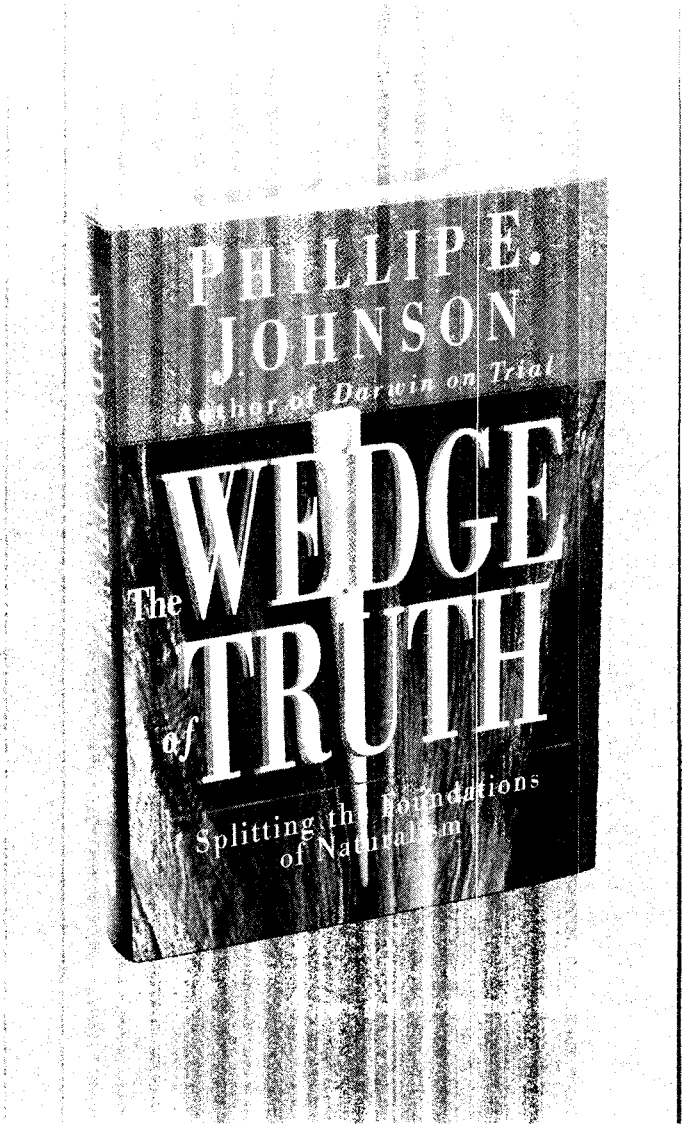
Challenging

A society ruled by science and the naturalistic philosophy that undergirds much of it faces certain problems. Science speaks so authoritatively in our culture that many are tempted to use its authority to back claims that go beyond the available evidence. How can we know when such ideological sleight of hand has taken place? More importantly, while we may learn a great deal from science, it does not offer us unlimited knowledge. In fact, most scientists readily acknowledge that it cannot deal with ultimate purposes and meaning in life. So to what authority will we turn for these? The deficiencies in science and naturalism call for a cognitive revolution, a fundamental change in our worldview and thinking habits. And it all begins with a Wedge of truth. Phillip Johnson's new book *The Wedge of Truth* does not abandon a foundation of rational thought but acknowledges that reason encompasses more than science can provide. Johnson wants to reintroduce to public debate issues that have often been ruled out of court. In his attempt to split the foundations of naturalism, Johnson analyzes the latest debates about science and evolution. He incisively pinpoints philosophical assumptions and counters the objections to intelligent design theory raised by its most recent critics.



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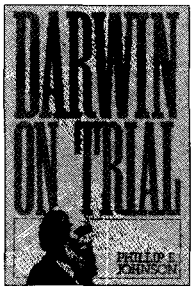

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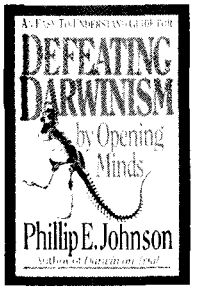

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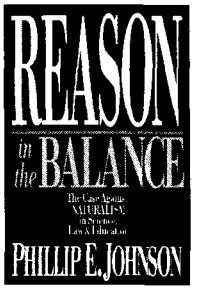

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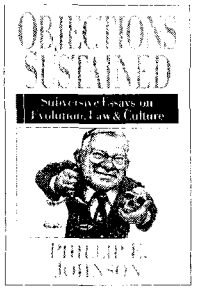

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